

*Routledge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*

# HEGEL AND ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

## A RE-EXAMINATION

Edited by
Glenn Alexander Magee



# Hegel and Ancient Philosophy

Hegel's debts to ancient philosophy are widely acknowledged by scholars, and by the philosopher himself. Roughly half of his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* is devoted to ancient philosophy, and throughout his work Hegel frequently frames his positions in relation to the thinkers and movements of antiquity. This volume presents original essays from leading scholars dealing with Hegel's debts to ancient thinkers, as well as his own, often problematic readings of ancient philosophy. While around half of the chapters discuss Hegel's treatment of Aristotle—a topic that has long been at the forefront of scholarship—the other half explore his relationship to such ancient figures as Xenophanes, Anaxagoras, Socrates, Plato, Sextus Empiricus, and the Stoics. The essays challenge a number of longstanding scholarly assumptions regarding, for example, Hegel's denigration of the "mythical," his developmentalist approach to ancient thought, his conception of the state in relation to the Greek *polis*, his "hermeneutic" of the Platonic dialogues, and his use of Aristotelian concepts in arguments concerning the psyche, the body, and their unity and distinction.

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## A Re-Examination

**Edited by**
**Glenn Alexander Magee**

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

First published 2018
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

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*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*
A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-1-138-09497-0 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-315-10586-4 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

To Geoffrey Reginald Gilchrist Mure



Taylor & Francis
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# Contents

*Abbreviations and Conventions* ix
*Acknowledgments* x

**Editor's Introduction** **1**

**1 Xenophanes and Presocratic Thought: A Critical Perspective on Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*** **9**
ROBERT METCALF

**2 On the Speculative Significance of Anaxagoras in Hegel's Lectures** **25**
ANDREW ALEXANDER DAVIS

**3 Hegel on the Trial of Socrates and the End of Aesthetic Democracy** **39**
PAUL T. WILFORD

**4 How Hegel Read the Platonic Dialogues** **57**
JERE O'NEILL SURBER

**5 The Platonic Dimension of Hegel's System** **70**
LAWRENCE BRUCE-ROBERTSON

**6 *Mens Divina* as *Lebendigkeit*: Hegel's Interpretation of *Metaphysics* 1072b26–27** **86**
ANDY GERMAN

**7 The Way Past the Stripping Argument in Hegel and Aristotle** **103**
JOSHUA MENDELSOHN

**8 The Aristotelian Metaphysics of Hegel's "Soul"** **115**
ALLEGRA DE LAURENTIIS

**9 Parts and Souls** **132**
ANTÓN BARBA-KAY

**10 On Contradiction: Hegel versus Aristotle, Sextus Empiricus, and Kant** **147**
RICHARD DIEN WINFIELD

**11 On Theory and Praxis: Hegel's Reformulation of an Aristotelian Distinction** **161**
FEDERICO ORSINI

**12 Ethical Life, Politics, and the Actualization of Freedom: Hegel and Aristotle's *Politics*** **174**
ANGELICA NUZZO

**13 Hegel's Critique of Stoicism** **189**
BERNARDO FERRO

*Contributors* 202
*Index* 205

# Abbreviations and Conventions

Hegel scholars disagree about which German editions should be used, which translators are superior to others, how key terminology should be rendered into English, and even how Hegel's works should be cited in endnotes. For the most part, the editor has adopted a *laissez faire* approach, allowing individual authors to follow their own scholarly convictions. All abbreviations are explained in the endnotes to the articles, but the following are often used:

A = addition (*Zusatz*).
*Enz.* = *Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften*.
LHP = *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*.
PhG = *Phänomenologie des Geistes*.
PhS = *Phenomenology of Spirit*.
PWH = *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*.
R = remark (*Anmerkung*).
SL = *The Science of Logic*.
VGP = *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*.
*Werke* = (usually) G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986).
WL = *Wissenschaft der Logik*.

The titles of specific books by Hegel have been italicized, but *not* the names of divisions within his philosophy. Hence, *Phenomenology of Spirit* is italicized, but "Philosophy of Spirit" (a division within the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*) is not. When "Logic" is not italicized it refers to the division within Hegel's system. When a specific text of the Logic is meant, reference is made to either *The Science of Logic* or to the *Encyclopedia Logic* (division one of the *Encyclopedia*). The editor has adopted the familiar custom of capitalizing certain important terms which have a special meaning in Hegel's philosophy (e.g., Spirit). In general, however, such capitalization has been used sparingly.

# Acknowledgments

On behalf of the Hegel Society of America, I would like to thank the following individuals, who served as readers for the papers collected herein: Robert Bernasconi, Brady Bowman, Clark Butler, David Butorac, Ardis Collins, Karin De Boer, Alfredo Ferrarin, Philip Grier, Edward Halper, Michael Inwood, Daniel Kirchner, Anton Koch, John McCumber, Giacomo Rinaldi, Eric Sanday, Allen Speight, Robert Stern, and Klaus Vieweg.

While assembling the program of the 2016 Hegel Society of America Conference was my responsibility, the actual meeting was organized—flawlessly—by David Morris, our host at Concordia University in Montreal. This was a major undertaking, in which David was assisted principally by Kay Rollans and Laura Gallivan. In addition, I must acknowledge the contribution of Michael Baur, who was very generous in offering advice on assembling the program, and planning the meeting.

G.A.M.
New York City
December 9, 2017

# Editor's Introduction

In 1940, G.R.G. Mure, fellow and tutor of Merton College, Oxford, published *An Introduction to Hegel*. Mure's book is one of many attempts to familiarize Anglophone readers with that most difficult of German philosophers, but it is also one of the most eccentric and, as Alfredo Ferrarin has pointed out, "unjustly forgotten."[1] The reason is that Mure introduces readers to Hegel by first giving them an introduction to Aristotle—a highly compressed but also detailed introduction, brimming with interesting insights, which occupies the first fifty pages of Mure's 175-page book.

Obviously, Mure did not take this approach simply because Aristotle was better known to his readers. (In 1940, the field of Hegel studies was still in its infancy in the English-speaking world.) Rather, Mure's position was that Hegel's philosophy can be understood as a modern transformation of Aristotelian ideas, and that Aristotle was the most important philosopher for Hegel. This must have seemed a surprising position for Mure to take, and it would surprise many scholars working today. Hegel's philosophy is almost always understood within the context of the tradition of German Idealism that preceded him, and that he is supposed to have brought to "completion." In other words, Hegel is understood as both depending upon, and reacting against (chiefly) Kant, Fichte, and Schelling.

Mure would never have denied that, without that tradition, Hegel could not have become Hegel. Nevertheless, he asks us to consider Hegel within a much larger historical context. In doing so, by the way, he was simply being true to the philosopher's own self-understanding. During the Jena period, when Hegel produced the outlines of his mature system as well as his first major work (*The Phenomenology of Spirit*), he devoted a great deal of thought to the history of philosophy, producing prodigious lecture notes that have come down to us. These notes are an exercise in self-understanding, for Hegel (like Aristotle) sees the history of philosophy as culminating in his own thought. (Surprisingly, he manages to make this clear, one feels compelled to say, without a trace of arrogance.) And, for Hegel, the history of philosophy itself is an exercise in self-understanding: it is the confrontation of Spirit, of humankind, with itself. In his own account of that history, Hegel's treatment of ancient philosophy (spanning from the Presocratics

to Late Antiquity) covers more than 800 pages in one standard edition of the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, which is well over half of the total work. Nor is Hegel's treatment of ancient philosophy confined to the *Lectures*: references are found throughout his writings. At Nuremberg, Hegel even made a translation of part of *De Anima*. His personal library (catalogued after his death) contained numerous volumes of primary and secondary literature on ancient philosophy.

Judging from his own lectures and other writings, Hegel seems to have seen the Greeks and the German Idealists as the twin peaks of the history of philosophy, with everything in between of comparatively lesser interest. There is certainly something to be said for this position. It has often been remarked that the study of what is great in Western philosophy is, in the final analysis, chiefly the study of the Greeks and the Germans. And movements such as scholasticism, Cartesian rationalism, and empiricism do indeed sometimes seem like detours, however necessary, that Reason took on its long march from the heights of Plato and Aristotle, to those of Kant and Hegel.

Ancient philosophy begins with the search for knowledge of Being, though this is not thematized as such until Parmenides. The search reaches its climax with Aristotle, for whom Being is identified with *a* being characterized by self-awareness, functioning as final cause of the universe itself. In other words, everything in heaven and on earth is understood as approximating (in one way or another) to complete and perfect self-awareness. What we find in ancient Greek thought, therefore, are the basic outlines of Hegelian philosophy in germinal form. It remained for Hegel to pluck Aristotle's perfect self-awareness from eternity, and to place it in time, at the culmination of a historical process. The development of human (more specifically, Western) self-consciousness is, for Hegel, the *telos* of both nature and history.

Aristotle's own position was the result of a dialectical engagement with the thought of his predecessors, and Hegel's transformation of Aristotle—and, by extension, the entire Greek tradition—was the result of a similar dialectic. It would not have been possible without the "subjective turn" in modern philosophy. (Nor, Hegel would insist, would it have been possible without the Protestant Reformation.) Nevertheless, the more one studies Hegel's indebtedness to ancient philosophy the more tempting it becomes to see a direct line from the ancients to Hegel. It seems heretical to say this, but it is also tempting to see his modern predecessors as simply the means by which he brought the genius of the ancients to completion, and consummated their love of wisdom in the form of his "System of Science."

Nevertheless, as noted earlier, scholars have tended to neglect Hegel's relation to ancient philosophy, and to focus instead on his engagement with his immediate predecessors. The present volume is intended as a small contribution toward addressing this neglect. It has its origins in the twenty-fourth biennial meeting of the Hegel Society of America, held at Concordia University in Montreal, November 4–6, 2016. Recognizing the crucial importance

of the topic, as well as the rather imperfect scholarly treatment of it, the Society devoted its conference to a re-examination of "Hegel and Ancient Philosophy."

Founded in 1968, the Hegel Society is the most prestigious organization for Hegel studies in North America. It holds conferences every two years, with all submissions blind reviewed by leading scholars from around the world. The authors who presented at the 2016 conference include major figures in the field of Hegel studies, as well promising younger scholars. Twelve papers were delivered, plus the Presidential Address by Angelica Nuzzo. The common denominator is that they offer a re-thinking—in some cases radically new—of aspects of Hegel's relationship to ancient philosophy. These essays are not intended to be, collectively, an exhaustive treatment of the topic. Nevertheless, they constitute a wide-ranging survey, covering Hegel's relationship to the Presocratics, Plato, Aristotle, Stoicism, and Skepticism.

The thirteen essays deal both with Hegel's debts to ancient thinkers, as well as his own, often problematic readings of ancient philosophy. Hegel's understanding of his predecessors was in many ways informed by the tradition of commentary that preceded him, a tradition that has been challenged by recent scholarship. This is particularly true of Hegel's relationship to Presocratic philosophy, which comes in for some trenchant criticism in this volume. Even where Hegel situates himself in relation to ancient philosophy, he sometimes does so in a way that misrepresents the philosophers in question, and overstates (or understates) his differences from them. As already noted, the Hegel-Aristotle relationship is of great importance, and it is well-represented here. Seven of the thirteen essays in the volume treat Hegel's relationship to Aristotle, frequently in ways that pose a major challenge to longstanding scholarly assumptions. It is correct to say that Hegel is enormously indebted to Aristotle, but the insistence on this has often obscured his debts to other ancient thinkers. One of the virtues of the present volume is that it attempts to address this lacuna in Hegel scholarship.

Chapter 1, by Robert Metcalf, takes Hegel's interpretation of Xenophanes to task, challenging his reading of Presocratic philosophy's "first monotheist" as the earliest and therefore "poorest" of the Eleatic thinkers. Metcalf argues instead that Xenophanes was a much more subtle and complex figure than Hegel recognized: a "theorist of mortality" who sought to define the limits of human knowledge, and whose practice of philosophy was *zetetic* and open-ended. For Metcalf, the form in which Xenophanes presents his ideas challenges Hegel's own disparagement of the "mythical" element in Greek philosophy.

Chapter 2, by Andrew Davis, deals with Hegel's relation to another Presocratic philosopher, Anaxagoras. The cosmogony of Anaxagoras is a fascinating tale involving a tightly packed collection of primal "seeds" caused to spin and break apart by the mysterious power of *nous* (intellect). Strangely, however, Hegel's discussion of Anaxagoras's ideas is neither accurate nor detailed—indeed, it is cursory, and shows a lack of concern with

faithfulness to the historical materials. To make matters even more puzzling, Hegel shows greater interest in the *life* of Anaxagoras. According to Davis, the reason for this is that Hegel sees him as important for the development of philosophy more for where he fails as a philosopher than for where he succeeds. Anaxagoras fails to give a rational account of the role of *nous*, his first principle, and thus he spurs Plato and Aristotle to make the attempt in their own philosophies. For Hegel, therefore, the significance of Anaxagoras is that he plays a key role in making possible greater developments in Greek philosophy.

In Chapter 3, Paul Wilford explores Hegel's treatment of Socrates and his trial. Hegel viewed Socrates as the discoverer of an individual *Moralität*, which put him into irreconcilable conflict with the *Sittlichkeit* (ethical life) of the Athenian *polis*. For Hegel, this conflict is of world-historical historical significance. It is resolved, ultimately, only by the coming into being of the modern state, in which the individual freedom of rational agents like Socrates is affirmed, and in which those same agents are able to identify themselves with the inherent rationality of modern social forms. Thus, the modern state reconciles the contradiction between *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit*, which is the root cause of Socrates's trial and execution. Wilford frames his discussion in terms of the complexities involved in understanding Hegel's treatment of Socrates within the context of German philhellenism, contrasting Hegel's position with Schiller's aesthetic ideal of Hellenism.

Chapter 4, by Jere Surber, deals with Hegel's manner of reading the Platonic dialogues. Surber makes the provocative claim that Hegel was, in fact, the first serious philosophical interpreter of the dialogues. As is always the case with Hegel (and, it must be said, with any great philosopher), his interpretations were made within the horizon of his own ideas. Surber shows how the idea of the "concrete universal" is central to Hegel's reading of Plato. Hegel's treatment of three Platonic dialogues is given special attention: *Parmenides*, *Timaeus*, and *Republic*. Hegel regarded these dialogues as so important for the simple reason that he saw them as corresponding (respectively) to the three major divisions of his own philosophy: Logic, Philosophy of Nature, and Philosophy of Spirit. Surber is attuned to the weaknesses in Hegel's reading of Plato, but he compares his approach favorably to more recent attempts to interpret Plato (e.g., the approach of analytic philosophy, the Straussian approach, etc.).

Chapter 5, by Lawrence Bruce-Robertson, explores Hegel's treatment of Plato's middle dialogues specifically. The *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Parmenides* develop the idea that philosophy must be the search for an absolute, indeed *divine* knowledge that would be a "science of the Good." The approach of this science depends upon the separation (*chorismos*) of form and participant. Yet the *Parmenides* leaves us in *aporia* concerning precisely this separation, seemingly undermining the quest for absolute knowledge. Bruce-Robertson argues that in Hegel this Platonic search for the "science of the Good" becomes the project of developing systematic, speculative

philosophy. In Hegel's system the divine knowing sought by Platonic philosophy is achieved: the dialectic ends with the realization that in doing philosophy we are ourselves actualizing an absolute self-knowing that is understood, in the categories of religious representation, as divine. Hegelian philosophy ascends the Platonic divided line to the *noēsis* of Absolute Knowing, the overcoming of the subject-object distinction, in which the subject knows itself as all that is.

In Chapter 6, Andy German examines what appears at first to be a serious distortion in Hegel's treatment of Aristotle. In *Metaphysics* Lambda, Aristotle depicts God as unchanging and eternal; an unmoving mover. However, in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel ascribes potentiality and change to Aristotle's God. He thus seems to willfully distort Aristotle, transforming his God into a forerunner to Absolute Spirit. However, German defends Hegel's interpretation of Aristotle's God, arguing that Hegel is attempting to understand what Aristotle means when he says in Book Lambda that "Life belongs to it [God] too, for the *energeia* of *nous* is life." For Hegel, the nature of life, especially the life of conscious beings, is essentially contradictory (a point he defends in *The Science of Logic*). Therefore, if God is alive, he must of necessity exhibit the same contradictory nature. German succeeds in showing that, far from twisting Aristotle into a distorted image of his own thought, Hegel offers us a profound and philosophically illuminating interpretation of the Aristotelian theology.

Chapter 7, by Joshua Mendelsohn, continues the dialogue between Hegelian Logic and Aristotelian metaphysics. Specifically, Mendelsohn compares the *Science of Logic*'s transition from being to essence with the so-called stripping argument in *Metaphysics* Zeta. Aristotle's argument is intended to refute the idea that substance (*ousia*) can be defined merely as "that which underlies" (*hupokeimenon*, substratum) a thing's shifting properties. If substance were substratum, then substance would be completely indefinite, given that once all the properties of a thing are "stripped" away (imaginatively), all that is left would be a matter without any individual character. In a remarkably similar argument, Hegel reasons that we cannot give an account of determinate being so long as we insist on seeing it merely as an indefinite *something* that "has" properties—i.e., so long as the relation between determinate being and its properties is purely external. Both men hold that only a theory of internal determination (in Hegel's words, essence) can solve the problem of how to conceive determinate being or substance. Mendelsohn's account not only brings out striking parallels between these arguments, but also shows that Hegel and Aristotle employ similar methodologies.

Chapter 8, by Allegra de Laurentiis, is the first of two essays dealing with Hegel in relation to Aristotle's *De Anima*. De Laurentiis notes that Hegel's treatment of *Seele* (soul) in the Philosophy of Spirit frequently employs Aristotelian concepts, drawn mostly from *De Anima* and the *Metaphysics*. Recognizing Hegel's dependence on Aristotle in these passages is of great help

in understanding some very difficult arguments Hegel makes concerning the soul and the body. In particular, de Laurentiis argues that Hegel's remarks deepen our understanding of how the relation of soul to body is conceived, in his own philosophy and in Aristotle's. Both thinkers hold that soul is a being that is at once material and non-material, for both hold that *life* is a necessary condition for thought. As do German and Mendelsohn, de Laurentiis demonstrates that the two philosophers illuminate each other: Aristotle helps us to understand Hegel's *Seele*, but Hegel also sheds much light on Aristotle's conception of *psuchē*.

In Chapter 9, Antón Barba-Kay compares Hegel and Aristotle on the issue of whether the soul has parts. Barba-Kay surveys Hegel's criticisms of the psychology of his time, in which he demonstrates that it is dependent upon an untenable empiricism that treats the soul as a "mere aggregate" of distinct parts or functions. Although Aristotle himself can be seen as exhibiting a similar sort of empiricism, Barba-Kay argues nevertheless that Aristotle's views on the soul are fundamentally compatible with Hegel's. This will no doubt surprise readers. Hegel treats the soul as an irreducible whole: its capacities are not separable, but are instead the various aspects or moments of a single rational activity. By contrast, Aristotle's argument in *De Anima* seems to divide the soul into a number of distinct parts. Interestingly, however, in the *Lectures* Hegel does not attribute this position to Aristotle, and sees the Aristotelian position as not unlike his own. Barba-Kay argues that one can defend Hegel's interpretation—up to a point. While Hegel has a strong affinity for Aristotle's conception of the embodied soul, Hegel still seems beholden to the Kantian dichotomy between reason and nature: repeatedly in the Philosophy of Spirit he speaks as if Spirit must master, or be freed from, natural determinations. Thus, when Hegel interprets Aristotle's position on the separability of *nous* as evidence that "Spirit repels matter from itself," one must consider whether he has not fundamentally misunderstood the Stagirite. Barba-Kay's essay treats these complex issues with subtlety and insight.

Chapter 10, by Richard Dien Winfield, deals at length with Hegel's provocative critique of "the principle of contradiction" (or, sometimes, "non-contradiction"). Beginning with Aristotle, who first clearly formulated it, almost all philosophers have regarded the principle as unchallengeable. It is, without question, the most sacred of logical cows. Winfield examines how Aristotle, Sextus Empiricus, and Kant all embraced the principle of contradiction, leading to impasses, of various kinds, in their thought. However, Hegel's account of determinacy lays out a devastating critique of the principle. Winfield explains this critique at length, and discusses why Hegel offers it not in the *Science of Logic*'s Doctrine of the Concept, as one might expect, but instead in the Doctrine of Essence. Ultimately, in liberating reason from the principle of contradiction, Hegel's *Logic* allows reason to become truly autonomous, or self-determining.

In Chapter 11, Federico Orsini treats Aristotle's distinction between theory and *praxis* in terms of Hegel's idea of "objective thinking." Orsini

investigates Aristotle's criteria for distinguishing between the different types of human activity, and how Hegel appraises those criteria. He winds up identifying a major area of disagreement between the two philosophers—specifically between what motivates Aristotle's *theoria*, and what motivates Hegelian speculative philosophy. For Hegel, it is not the task of science to pursue human happiness by reconciling us to a world that exists independent of us, whole and complete. Rather, Hegel sees the purpose of speculative philosophy (i.e., true philosophy) as Spirit recognizing itself "in everything in heaven and on earth" (*Enz.* § 377). Orsini's argument challenges some of the assumptions of recent pragmatist readings of Hegel, which deemphasize the metaphysical character of Hegel's philosophy, and privilege praxis over theory.

In Chapter 12, the conference's Presidential Address, Angelica Nuzzo challenges some widely held scholarly assumptions concerning Hegel's debts to Aristotle's ethical and political thought. It is generally acknowledged that Aristotle had an important influence on Hegel's early practical philosophy. For example, there is Hegel's idea of an "ethical totality" expressed by the *Volk*, the concept of which is indebted to the Aristotelian understanding of the *polis*. Further, Hegel's position that the *Volk* is "prior" to the individual citizen was also clearly influenced by Aristotle. However, most scholars hold that with the later *Philosophy of Right* Hegel moves toward a new conception of *Sittlichkeit*, and with it a vision of the modern state that is fundamentally different from Aristotle's *polis*. Thus, it is often asserted that in this text, which represents Hegel's mature ethical and political thought, Hegel distances himself from Aristotle in some significant ways. Nuzzo challenges this scholarly consensus by arguing for a much more nuanced treatment of the Hegel-Aristotle relationship. She demonstrates that Hegel makes use of Aristotle's *Politics* Book One in developing the *Philosophy of Right*'s tripartite structure of Abstract Right-Morality-Ethical Life. Hegel draws upon Aristotle, among other things, in his devastating critique of the theory of the state propounded by the natural right tradition, and in his critique of Kantian *Moralität*. Nuzzo argues convincingly that Hegel was still deeply indebted to Aristotle in his mature practical philosophy.

The final chapter, by Bernardo Ferro, considers Hegel's treatment of Stoicism. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, we find Hegel's most famous remarks on this philosophy, which flourished in Late Antiquity. There we find Hegel turning from the "master-servant dialectic" to "Stoicism," "Skepticism," and "the unhappy consciousness" as expressions of the servant's standpoint. All are forms by which the servant (*Knecht*) seeks freedom and recognition—not in reality, but in thought. Hegel's treatment of Skepticism has received a great deal of attention, but scholars have been comparatively less interested in his remarks on Stoicism. Ferro's essay attempts to address this neglect, by treating in detail Hegel's account of Stoicism—both in the *Phenomenology* and in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. Ferro succeeds in showing that Hegel's understanding of Stoicism is not only highly original, but also sheds new light on Hegel's own system of philosophy.

The foregoing ought to give some indication not only of the breadth of these essays, but of their original and provocative claims. A comprehensive study of Hegel's debts to ancient philosophy has yet to be written, but the essays presented here will surely serve as an indispensable foundation for further research.

## Note

1 Alfredo Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 7n.

# 1 Xenophanes and Presocratic Thought

## A Critical Perspective on Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*

*Robert Metcalf*

> The history of philosophy has to do not with what is gone, but with the living present.
>
> —Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*[1]

Our access to the earliest Greek philosophers is compromised, first, by the oft-lamented paucity of texts that remain from this period and, second, by the fact that in most cases, these meager textual remains are extant only because they were used to confirm a given interpretation of the Presocratic thinker in question. Often, it was the interpretation presented by Aristotle or a commentator on Aristotle in reviewing what early predecessors said about a chosen philosophical topic, or even interpretations offered much later in antiquity. Indeed, when we examine our sources for the extant texts from Presocratic thinkers, we find that our access to the earliest philosophers is mediated by two layers of interpretation placed upon the so-called Presocratics in the age of Plato and Aristotle, each layer exerting a decisive influence on subsequent interpretations.

The first layer is what I shall call the "Socratic" interpretation—not because it reflects the historical Socrates (though it may, for all we know), but because it reflects the characterization of Presocratic philosophy as a whole in relation to, or by contrast with, the figure of Socrates. According to this interpretation, philosophy before Socrates was principally concerned with *phusis*, and specifically with an eye to providing an explanation for all coming to be and passing away (or, with the Eleatics, denying that there is any coming-to-be or passing-away), but without regard for the limitations of human knowledge.

The second layer of interpretation is that which is offered by Aristotle in Book One of *Metaphysics*, wherein he describes all of the earliest Greek philosophers as attempting to explain coming to be and passing away by appealing only to various material causes.[2] According to this second layer of interpretation, the great contribution and weakness of Presocratic thinking was its approach to *phusis* by way of the material cause. For Aristotle,

and his followers, there is no question that Presocratic thinking had been superseded by Aristotle's more fully developed natural philosophy. But precisely because these interpretive layers steer our approach to Presocratic philosophy, a careful reexamination of the extant texts must always go hand in hand with a critique of received interpretations, if we have any hope of encountering Presocratic thought in some sense unfiltered by later philosophers. On this latter point, Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* makes significant contributions to the critique of traditional interpretations, for Hegel stresses the methodological imperative that we proceed historically, and "ascribe to philosophy only what is immediately given to us, and that alone [*nur dies ihr zuschreiben, was uns unmittelbar angeben wird*]."[3]

Yet these multiple layers through which Presocratic philosophy has been interpreted by tradition and passed down to us are still present in Hegel's *Lectures* and are even reinforced conceptually, since Hegel views all of Presocratic philosophy as having been decisively overcome and superseded with the coming-to-consciousness of thinking "subjectivity" in Socrates.[4] Further, though Hegel does rightfully take issue with Aristotle's anachronistic ascription of the concept of *archē* to the earliest Presocratics,[5] he advances further the "developmentalist" approach to their interpretation, with two implications. First, that "the earliest philosophies are the poorest and the most abstract . . . they keep merely to generalities not yet realized [*sie halten sich nur in Allgemeinheiten, sind nicht erfüllt*]" (41/60); and, second, that subsequent philosophies are more developed, richer and more profound. In later philosophy, Hegel writes, "everything which at first seems to be past and gone must be preserved and retained, and it must itself be a mirror of the whole history."[6] In what follows, then, we shall critically examine Hegel's interpretation of Greek thought, and with it the multiple layers of ancient interpretation on which it is based, by focusing on a Presocratic thinker who disrupts the developmentalist schema that has been imposed on Presocratic thought: Xenophanes of Colophon.

For the most part, Xenophanes has played only a marginal role in histories of Greek philosophy, either because he has been regarded as unworthy of serious philosophical attention, or because his significance is thought to lie mainly in his founding of the Eleatic School, the accomplishments of which are better formulated by Parmenides and later Eleatics.[7] And yet, the extant writings of Xenophanes offer us not only the first questioning of knowledge, but also a philosophical approach to *phusis* that differs significantly from what we find in the writings of other Presocratic thinkers. While the "Socratic" layer of received interpretation has it that the Presocratics were concerned with the causes of coming-to-be and passing-away for *phusis* as a whole without regard to the limitations of human knowledge about such things, it turns out that Xenophanes anticipates by more than a century Socrates's focus on the difference between human knowledge and that proper to the divine. At the same time, Xenophanes's recognition

of human limitations with respect to such knowledge does not lead him to abandon inquiry into nature (*historia peri tēs phuseōs*) in the way that Socrates does—or says that he did—in Plato's *Phaedo*.[8] Thus, at the very least, Xenophanes's thinking allows us to reconsider the influential portrait of Presocratic philosophy that was used as a contrast to Socrates's philosophical activity in the writings of Plato and Xenophon, and which is then carried over into Hegel's developmental interpretation of Greek philosophy. But let us begin by tracing the contours of this "Socratic" interpretation of Presocratic philosophy, since it informs everything that comes after it.

That Presocratic philosophy was principally a matter of investigating *phusis* is something widely agreed on by ancient authors, even while they disagree as to whether Socrates had himself engaged in such investigations. Most provocative among these ancient accounts is the absurd caricature of Presocratic thought in Aristophanes's *Clouds*, where Socrates's "thinkery" is presented as a place where young men go to learn a form of persuasion that is informed by the ongoing study of *phusis*—e.g., "the heavens are a stove, and we are charcoal," etc. (lines 94–99). Socrates is portrayed there as investigating what might be called "natural causes" for phenomena traditionally attributed to the will of the gods, thereby rejecting the traditional gods in favor of novel, quasi-materialistic deities.[9] In Plato's *Apology*, on the other hand, Socrates recalls this comedic portrait of him as a philosopher and emphatically denies having ever pursued an "investigation into things below the earth and in the heavens [*zētōn ta te hupo gēs kai ourania*]" (19b-d), for he did not lay claim to any wisdom beyond the human sort that is aware of its own limitations. Xenophon, too, echoes this denial in his *Memorabilia*, where he asserts that Socrates was never seen doing anything impious or irreverent or heard uttering such things:

> For he did not discuss the nature of all things [*peri tēs tōn pantōn phuseōs*]—that which was the focus of investigation for most of the others, what the sophists call the *kosmos*, and by what determinants each part of the heavens comes to be (I.1.11).[10]

Of course, the terms by which Xenophon offers this testimony on Socrates have the effect of deepening the suspicions widely held that Presocratic philosophy was involved in a project both audacious and impious.

However fitting it may or may not be to describe Presocratic philosophy as a whole according to the characteristics just noted—namely, as investigating things below the earth and in the heavens, studying the *phusis* of all things in order to know the causes of coming to be and passing away, jettisoning traditional religious beliefs as they pertain to *phusis*, etc.—it cannot be doubted that these characteristics apply fairly well to the spirit and letter of Xenophanes's writings. Xenophanes pursues, as candidly as any Presocratic thinker, the debunking of traditional, religious accounts of

phenomena, in favor of what we might well call a "naturalistic" approach. Consider, for example, the following texts:

FRAGMENT 32: "And she whom they call Iris, this too is by nature a cloud, purple and red and greenish-yellow to behold."[11]

FRAGMENT 30: "Sea is the source of water, and the source of wind, for without the great sea there would be no wind nor streams of rivers nor rainwater; but the great sea is the begetter of clouds, winds and rivers."[12]

TESTIMONIUM 32: "He says that the sun and the stars come from clouds."[13]

As James Lesher has argued, "Without explicitly announcing their banishment, Xenophanes has dispatched an array of traditional sea, river, cloud, wind, and rain deities (hence Zeus himself) to the explanatory sidelines."[14] Furthermore, in the fragments that are perhaps most familiar to us from this early thinker, Xenophanes explicitly criticizes traditional ideas about the gods—for example, the idea that the gods are born, have bodies and wear clothes;[15] that the gods are flat-nosed and black (as believed by the Ethiopians), or red-haired and blue-eyed (as believed by the Thracians);[16] and finally, that the gods engage in deception or in other actions that would be thought immoral if done by human beings.[17] Interesting for our purposes is the fact that Hegel takes these fragments criticizing traditional representations of the gods as implying a critique of the world of sense-perception altogether. He writes: "The manner in which [Xenophanes] expresses himself towards the sensuous world and finite thought-determinations is seen most clearly in his opposition to the Greek mythological conceptions of the gods."[18] But the fragments themselves do not compel such a reading. Rather, what is more striking is the way in which Xenophanes brings together in his writings both the philosophical critique of inherited religious beliefs and the naturalistic inquiry that obviates the need for religious explanations of phenomena like rainbows, rain, sun and stars, eclipses, etc.[19]

We encounter Xenophanes's philosophical "naturalism" very clearly in his famous lines about earth and water:

FRAGMENT 27: "for all things are from the earth and to the earth all things come in the end."[20]

FRAGMENT 29: "All things which come into being and grow are earth and water."[21]

FRAGMENT 33: "For we all come into being from earth and water."[22]

Given the influence of Aristotle's interpretation of the "earliest philosophers," it is tempting to read these fragments as identifying what Aristotle called the *archē*.[23] On this way of reading the fragments, whereas Thales identified the *archē* with water, and Anaximenes identified it with air (*aēr*), Xenophanes proposes earth—or, alternatively, earth and water together—as the *archē*.[24] While it is certainly possible that Xenophanes understands

earth or earth/water as an *archē* in this Aristotelian sense, we must keep in mind that Aristotle does not credit Xenophanes with such a theory of the *archē*, and, furthermore, what Aristotle says about Empedocles's innovation in adding earth to the plural *archai* (along with water, air, and fire) strongly suggests that Aristotle did not understand Xenophanes to be offering a theory of some material *archē*.[25] For his part, Hegel followed Aristotle in thinking that Xenophanes was not proposing earth (or earth/water) as an *archē*, and he writes rather dismissively that

> such physical opinions as these can have no great interest. They are meant to have no speculative significance [*keine spekulative Bedeutung*] any more than are those of our own physicists . . . [T]his does not signify existence [*das Wesen*], physical principles, as did the water of Thales.[26]

Nonetheless, even if Xenophanes does propose earth or earth/water as the generative source of all things, we need not construe this claim in the sense of the Aristotelian material cause.[27] The question, really, is this: what is a sixth-century BCE thinker saying when he writes that all things come to be from earth [*ek gaiēs*], or that we come to be from earth and water [*gaiēs te kai hydatos ekgenomestha*]? It is far from evident that when Xenophanes writes, "For we all come into being from earth and water" and "All things which come into being and grow are earth and water," he means earth and water as inert material substrates requiring some other source of change.[28] There are meanings for the Presocratic basic concepts, like "earth and water," beyond what Aristotle means by them.[29] In Homer, for example, the expression "earth and water" is used to refer to the elements (in the non-technical sense) from which we mortals come to be and into which, ultimately, we shall waste away—as when, in Book VII of Homer's *Iliad*, Menelaus observes that his fellow warriors are hesitant to face Hektor and says to them:

> Ah me, you braggarts, you women of Achaea, men no more! Surely this will be outrage dread and dire/If no man of the Danaans now goes to meet Hektor. But may you one and all turn to earth and water [*all' humeis men pates hudōr kai gaia genoisthe*], you who sit there each man with no heart in him, utterly inglorious [*hekastoi akērioi, aklees*]. Against this man will I myself arm; but from on high are the issues of victory held by the immortal gods [*nikēs peirat' echontai en athanatoisi theoisin*].
>
> (96–102)

The remark about turning to earth and water here has contrastive force in relation to the prospect of winning undying glory in battle—indeed, Hektor closed his challenge to them by remarking that his glory will never die [*to . . . emon kleos ou pot' oleitai*] if he slays the best of the Achaeans on the battlefield (line 92). Failing to win such glory, even failing to face

the challenge of winning such glory, is tantamount to allowing oneself to fade back into the elements from which one came to be. Thus, the sense of "earth and water" in Homer conveys perishability, the unavoidable mortality to which all human beings are condemned save the exceptional figure, like Hektor or Achilles, whose glory will not die with him. It is fitting that Menelaus's words here close with his resolve to take up arms himself while drawing their attention to the immortal gods. The immortality of the gods brings into sharp relief the fact that human beings come to be from earth and water and return to these elements, once dead. The possibility that Xenophanes's thoughts on earth and water are closer to the Homeric sense of these elements than to Aristotle's might draw on a line from Diogenes Laertius for some support. Diogenes writes: "[Xenophanes] was the first person to proclaim that everything which comes to be is perishable, and that the soul is breath [*kai hē psuchē pneuma*]" (9.2.19).

Xenophanes's attention to mortality—whether or not it is the unexpressed meaning of his fragments on earth/water—is certainly the focal point of one of his most important texts (though, stunningly, it is not even mentioned in Hegel's treatment of Xenophanes):

FRAGMENT 18: "By no means did the gods reveal all things to mortals from the beginning, but over time, by searching, they discover better."[30]

This fragment is both a magnificent bit of poetry and one that conveys philosophical meaning in a remarkably concise way. At the same time, the form is such that it allows for varied interpretations. Not surprisingly, this has resulted in ongoing scholarly debate.[31] Its structure is simple—a negative claim in the first line, followed by a positive claim in the second—but its force turns on the multiple oppositions that it plays off one another: gods/mortals—this opposition heightened by the immediate juxtaposition of the words, *theoi thnētois*, in the Greek; reveal/discover [*hypedeixan/epheuriskousin*]—the first verb taking the gods as its subject, the second implying mortals as its subject; "from the beginning" or "from the outset" [*ap' archēs*]/"over time" [*chronōi*]—an opposition that underscores the very different temporal character of the gods vis-à-vis the temporal character of mortals. Thus, if mortals are to discover, *epheuriskousin* (a verb that suggests suddenness of discovery), they must attempt to do this over time through the work of seeking, *chronōi zētountes*. Finally there is the opposition "all things"/"better": what the gods are able to reveal, were they revealing it to mortals, is "all things," *ta panta*, the entirety of what is, whereas mortals are left to scratch out a discovery of something better, *ameinon*.[32] Of course, the implication of this latter opposition is that the discoveries made through mortal *zētein* are by their very nature ongoing, incomplete: to discover, over time, something better than what was discovered previously is not to discover or "reveal" (in a grandiose sense) everything in its complete truth.[33]

Fragment 18 would therefore seem to go well with the thought expressed, most famously, as follows:

FRAGMENT 34: "No man knows, or ever will know, the truth about the gods and about everything I speak of: for even if one chanced to say what is absolutely the case, still he would not *know*, as seeming cleaves to all things [*autos homōs ouk oide; dokos d'epi pasi tetuktai*]."[34]

To work, through *zētein*, toward further discoveries within the insurmountable context of seeming (*dokos*) is the portion, *moira*, that is allotted to us as mortals. Fragment 34 does not explicitly state that knowledge belongs to the gods alone, but when read in conjunction with Fragment 18, it would seem to imply this. The gods may have the power to reveal the truth about "the gods and all things (of which Xenophanes speaks)," but they have not done so. Instead, the allotment for human beings is seeming [*dokos*]—which adheres to or cleaves to all things—and to work through *zētein* toward some better discovery. Thus, even if knowledge is not explicitly reserved for the divine, Xenophanes's claim as to the allotment that befalls mortals is intensified by this implicit contrast with the divine.

The radical difference between the divine and the human is presented most vividly, of course, in the following texts:

FRAGMENT 23: "One God is greatest among gods and men, not at all like mortals in body or in thought."[35]

FRAGMENT 24: ". . . whole he sees, whole he thinks, and whole he hears [*houlos horai, houlos de noei, houlos de t' akouei*]."[36]

FRAGMENT 25: "But effortlessly he shakes all things by thinking with his mind [*all' apaneuthe ponoio noou phreni panta kradainei*]."[37]

FRAGMENT 26: "He remains forever in the same place, entirely motionless [*aiei d' en t'autōi mimnei kinoumenos ouden*], nor is it proper for him to move from one place to another [*oude meterchesthai min epiprepei allote allēi*]."[38]

No doubt it is these fragments, portraying the one god, "greatest among gods and human beings," non-anthropomorphically, that have had the greatest influence on subsequent philosophy—from the revolutionary theology of Plato's *Republic*, to that of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, and beyond.[39] But while there is at least a family resemblance between the attributes of Xenophanes's non-anthropomorphic god and "being" as formulated by the Eleatics, it should be clear that Xenophanes's philosophical theology does not entail the Eleatic denial that there is coming-to-be and passing-away. For one could believe in a non-anthropomorphic god described in Xenophanes's terms while also holding the idea that Diogenes Laertius ascribes to Xenophanes: namely, that "everything which comes to be is perishable [*pan to ginomenon phtharton esti*]" (9.2.19).

If we pause to restate the main points of the outline-sketch I've offered of Xenophanes's philosophical achievement, it looks like this: Xenophanes is a naturalistic thinker (either a materialist in the vein of the Milesians before him, or perhaps a theorist of mortality in the way highlighted by Diogenes Laertius), debunking religious explanations of natural phenomena in a way comparable to his debunking of folk-theology. Over against the traditional idea of "revelation" from divine sources, Xenophanes emphasizes the ongoing work of human *zētein* to get at something better than what we had before—never a complete manifestation, but partial discoveries that improve our understanding over time. What gives meaning to the work of *zētein* is the fact that human being never get beyond *dokos*, "seeming," which adheres to all things.

It should be clear how very different this interpretation is from Hegel's, which stresses, above all, Xenophanes's significance as founder of the Eleatic school, with the implication that he denied all coming-to-be and passing-away, and disregarded the evidence of sense-perception;[40] and then, following from this, Hegel's dismissing of Xenophanes's earth (or earth-water) fragments as having no philosophical significance. Further, it is telling that what Hegel takes from fragment 34, and its idea that *dokos*, seeming, "cleaves to all things," is its showing that Xenophanes had, in Hegel's words, "a double consciousness [*ein gedoppeltes Bewußtsein*]: a pure consciousness and consciousness of Being, and a consciousness of opinion [*ein reines Bewußtsein und Bewußtsein des Wesens und ein Bewußtsein der Meinung*]" (247/283).

While it is the case that, in fragment 34, Xenophanes is careful to distinguish someone happening to state the truth [*tuchoi tetelesmenon eipōn*] from actually knowing the truth [*eidenai*]—in a manner similar to his distinction in fragment 18 between discovering something better and having all things revealed (by the gods)—still, we do not find in Xenophanes anything like Parmenides's teaching that we must learn both "the unshaken heart of well-rounded truth," and "the opinions of mortals in which there is no true reliance" (28B1, lines 29–30). It is Parmenides's distinction, not Xenophanes's, that lends itself to the division, familiar in Greek thought, between thinking [*noein*] and sense-perception [*aisthēsis*]—and this division is central to Hegel's understanding of what philosophy is, and how it differs from non-philosophy.

In the *Lectures*, Hegel writes that in sense-perception and feeling, "I find myself confined and am not free; but I am free when I have consciousness of my feeling [or sense-perception; *Empfindung*]."[41] Then, later in the *Lectures* he writes: "Thought must be for itself, must come into existence in its freedom, liberate itself from nature [*sich vom Natürlichen losreißen*] and come out of its immersion in mere sense-perception [*aus dem Versenktsein in die Anschauung heraustreten*]."[42] And yet it is Parmenides, not Xenophanes, who speaks of two routes of inquiry along the lines of the *noein-aisthēsis* divide: namely, "the only routes of inquiry" as laid out in fragment 5 by

Parmenides, and then echoed in fragment 6.[43] By contrast, Xenophanes's fragments address only human *zētein*, and it is consistent with these fragments to understand such *zētein* operating both empirically (e.g., making inferences from fossil finds, atmospheric phenomena, etc.) and conceptually, in drawing out the necessary implications of theological claims, for example. The testimonium preserved in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is a perfect example of what a distinctively philosophical form of *zētein* might look like:

TESTIMONIUM 12 (FROM ARISTOTLE, *RHETORIC* 1399B6–10): "Xenophanes used to say that those who say the gods are born are just as impious as those who say that they die, since in both ways it follows that there is a time when the gods do not exist."

At this point we might content ourselves with the narrowly scholarly considerations that could be brought to bear against Hegel's interpretation: for example, his reliance upon the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise, *On Melissus, Xenophanes and Gorgias*, and indeed his reliance on Aristotle's claims about Xenophanes in the *Metaphysics*, etc. Beyond these considerations, however, it must be pointed out that there is a larger philosophical commitment on Hegel's part that leads him to read Xenophanes in line with the development of Eleatic thought, and so leads him to disregard those fragments that disrupt the developmentalist schema. What I have in mind here is Hegel's rather stringent criterion for what is to count as "thought" in the history of philosophy. On this point, Hegel writes:

> Thought is, on the contrary, simply its manifestation; this is its nature, what it is itself—to be clear. Being manifest [*Manifestieren*] is not a condition which may be or may not be equally, so that thought may remain as thought when it is not manifested, but being manifest is itself its being.[44]

Hegel's gloss on thought as *Manifestieren* is fascinating in its own right, but for our purposes its significance lies in what it entails for his reading of Xenophanes. The context for this passage, which occurs in the *Lectures* before his detailed treatment of Presocratic thought, is Hegel's explanation that the "mythical" within philosophical discourse is not adequate to convey philosophical thought. Hegel writes:

> Thought too ought not to be concealed by means of myth, for the object of the mythical is just to give expression to and reveal thought. . . . [T]hought is self-revealing, and hence myth does not form a medium adequate for its conveyance.[45]

Indeed, he goes so far as to contend that myth—for example, the various "philosophical" myths found in Plato's dialogues—is, strictly speaking,

not yet philosophy, as when he writes: "Philosophy is only present when thought, as such, is made the absolute ground and root of everything else, and in these modes of representation [art, poetry, myth] this is not so."[46]

In Plato's case, Hegel views the myths either as images contrived to illustrate the thoughts that Plato already had in mind, or merely as a means of introducing a difficult matter, or as indicative of his inability to express himself in the manner of pure thought.[47] Yet, it follows in every one of these cases that, once thought attains the power to express itself adequately, "myth becomes a superfluous adornment [*eine überflüssiger Schmuck*], by which philosophy is not advanced."[48] To illustrate such a transition, Hegel points to the difference between the myths in Plato's texts—many of which he concedes are very beautiful[49]—and the form of argumentation presented in the *Parmenides*, where, to Hegel at least, thought is expressed in the manner suitable to its manifestation, its "being clear."[50]

Even though Parmenides incorporates myth in his writing more than Xenophanes does (cf. 28B1, the entirety of which is mythical), still Xenophanes's style of thinking can be called "mythical" in broader terms relevant to Hegel's critique, given that his fragments are typically poetic in expression, very condensed in their structure, and suggestive rather than explicit as to the implications that he wants the reader to draw from them. So, for example, the well-known fragments ridiculing anthropomorphic representations of the gods do not explicitly take issue with anthropomorphism, per se. Rather, with one exception, they simply state some interesting facts for the reader to mull over: Homer and Hesiod have portrayed the gods in immoral ways (Fragment 11); mortals say that the gods have bodies, wear clothes, etc. (Fragment 14); Thracians and Ethiopians differ in the phenotypes they depict the gods as having (Fragment 16). The exception among these fragments is the fanciful text about cows depicting bovine gods, horses equine gods, and so on (Fragment 15).[51] But it is *our* interpretation of these fragments that specifies their implication in terms of a critique of anthropomorphism.[52] Similarly, Xenophanes's famous fragment 38, "If god had not made yellow honey, men would consider figs far sweeter," is presumably not just a comment about honey and figs—yet it does not itself formulate the philosophical point for which it is famous.[53] Xenophanes's thinking is elliptical in ways that may remind us of Pascal's or Nietzsche's aphorisms, and it is this inexplicit, elliptical character of his thought that is nearer to myth, understood as a discourse whose meaning is resistant to full explication, more than to the Eleatic argumentation presented in Plato's *Parmenides*.

Indeed, the example of Plato's *Parmenides* shows us just what is at stake in Hegel's assimilation of Xenophanes to the Eleatic school of thought. Understanding Xenophanes as the earliest, and thus as the "poorest" of the Eleatics affords Hegel a basis for selecting what is important in Xenophanes's fragments and disregarding the rest, or chalking them up to a kind of confusion or "double-consciousness." Xenophanes is not yet Parmenides-Zeno-Melissus, not yet the argumentative tour de force on

display in Plato's *Parmenides*, and whatever "thought" comes through in Xenophanes's texts is a relatively imperfect approximation of what we find in the later Eleatics.[54] However, it is surely more plausible to say that Hegel's developmentalist approach to Presocratic thought and his stringent criterion for what is to count as "thought" properly understood have worked in tandem to obscure what is most innovative and philosophically significant in Xenophanes's writings. As I have argued, a careful examination of Xenophanes's fragments calls into question the "Socratic" interpretation of the Presocratics as insufficiently attentive to the limitations of human (in contrast to divine) knowledge, and it also calls into question the "Aristotelian" interpretation of the Presocratics as offering various material causes to account for coming-to-be and passing-away. By disrupting the developmentalist schema at work in the ancient interpretations that have come down to us, Xenophanes's thinking also disrupts Hegel's own developmentalist approach to Greek philosophy.

What we find missing from Hegel's account is Xenophanes as a theorist of mortality who seeks not only to articulate the limits of human knowledge, but also to clarify the possibility of ongoing discovery and human advancement in light of our mortal nature. Of course, this is not to deny a traceable "development" of Xenophanes's ideas in subsequent Greek philosophy—for his influence can be seen in the revolutionary theology of Plato's and Aristotle's texts, as well as the "skepticism," or at least epistemological questioning, taken up by Socrates and by Sextus Empiricus much later. Most importantly, for my interpretation, Xenophanes's provisional, incomplete, open-ended and experimental thinking articulates a philosophical sense of human inquiry, *zētein*, that anticipates Plato's *Statesman* and its conception of the dynamic and evolving character of epistemic practices.[55] But to appreciate this latter Xenophanes, and his continuing significance for philosophical thinking in the present day, we shall find ourselves in critical opposition to some of Hegel's deepest commitments in interpreting Greek philosophy.

## Notes

1 G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (henceforth LHP), *Vol. I: Greek Philosophy to Plato*, trans. E. S. Haldane (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 39; *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (henceforth *Werke*), eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), Vol. 18 (*Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* I), 58. I have amended Haldane's translation at certain points. Heidegger captures Hegel's point here somewhat differently in his essay "Hegel and the Greeks" when he writes: "[T]he tradition, experienced in the right way, provides us the present that stands over against us as the matter of thinking and, for that reason, is at issue. Genuine tradition is so far from being the dragging weight of what is past that it much rather frees us for what approaches us as present, and thus becomes the enduring directive toward the matter of thinking." See Martin Heidegger, "Hegel and the Greeks," trans. Robert Metcalf, in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 324.

2 This account then allows Aristotle to explain the development of Presocratic philosophy down to the age of thinkers like Anaxagoras and Empedocles, by showing the insufficiency of material causation for "generating the *phusis* of what is," as Aristotle puts it (*Metaphysics* I.3, 984b8–984b9), thus requiring explanation in terms of other causes: i.e., what Aristotle calls the moving or efficient cause, formal cause, and final cause.
3 LHP 1: 43; Hegel, *Werke* 18: 62.
4 Hegel writes in the *Lectures*: "Thus, with the *nous* of Anaxagoras, and still more with Socrates, there commences a subjective totality in which thought grasps itself, and thinking activity is the fundamental principle." LHP 1: 102; Hegel, *Werke* 18: 124.
5 On Hegel's criticism of Aristotle's *archē* as applied to the earliest Presocratics, see LHP 1: 44; Hegel, *Werke* 18: 63.
6 LHP 1: 41; Hegel, *Werke* 18: 61.
7 Xenophanes's philosophical ability is denigrated both by Heraclitus (12B40), and by Aristotle, when Aristotle writes that Xenophanes "made nothing clear" (*Metaphysics* Book One, 986b21). In line with Aristotle's judgment, a number of modern interpreters have been content to marginalize Xenophanes in their accounts of the Presocratics. For example, Cherniss: "Xenophanes . . . has become a figure in the history of Greek philosophy by mistake." See Harold Cherniss, "The Characteristics and Effects of Presocratic Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12 (1951): 319–345; 335. Fränkel: "If we take the word 'philosophy' in its strictest sense, then of all that Xenophanes said and was concerned with (at least from what we know), only his doctrine of God and critique of knowledge can be included under this heading. In all other aspects, this remarkable man appears expressly unphilosophical." See Hermann Fränkel, "Xenophanes's Empiricism and His Critique of Knowledge (B34)," in *The Pre-Socratics: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Alexander P. D. Mourelatos (Garden City, New York: Anchor, 1974), 118. Pickering: "[T]he sparse fragments which remain cannot justify the claim that Xenophanes was a philosopher of note." See F. R. Pickering, "Review: Xenophanes," *The Classical Review*, New Series 43 (1993): 232–233; 233.
8 According to three authors who are relatively late sources for his fragments, Xenophanes wrote a treatise titled "On Nature" (*Peri Physeōs*), though the credibility of their testimony on this point has been questioned. See the discussion of this in G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and Malcolm Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 166–167. The idea that Xenophanes wrote a formal work on *phusis* has its scholarly detractors: e.g., see John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 4th ed. (London: A. & C. Black, 1930.), 115f.
9 See, in particular, his argument that Zeus does not exist, but only clouds exist—"everything else is drivel" (lines 365–371). He admonishes Strepsiades to "believe in no god but ours: this Chaos, and the Clouds, and the Tongue, these three" (lines 422–423). Finally, at the end, Strepsiades laments having "tossed out the gods on account of Socrates" (lines 1476–1477).
10 The question of impiety attached to the philosophical study of *phusis* was something that occupied thinkers long after Socrates's trial and execution—as seen, for example, in the long discussion of atheism in Plato's *Laws* Book Ten, and even in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Book One, Chapter 2, where Aristotle takes up the question whether the science pertaining to first causes and principles is a matter of divine prerogative alone, and resolves this with the theological argument that "the divine does not admit of jealousy," with its implication that the gods will not begrudge our partaking of a science regarding the most divine matters, 982b29–983a11.

11 The source of this fragment is Scholium BLT on *Iliad* 11.27. J. H. Lesher provides a list of the phenomena traditionally viewed as divine "signs" that Xenophanes accounts for in naturalistic terms: (1) sun and stars coming from clouds, (2) eclipses, (3) comets, (4) lightning, (5) evaporation/rain. See J. H. Lesher, "Xenophanes's Scepticism," *Phronesis* 23 (1978): 1–21; 9–10.
12 The source of this fragment is the Geneva Scholium on *Iliad* 21.196.
13 The source of this testimonium is Pseudo-Plutarch, *Strom*. 4. Similarly, from Aetius (II, 20, 3), we have the testimonium that "Xenophanes says that the sun is made of ignited clouds"; cf. Testimonium 39: "The things on boats which shine like stars—which some call Dioscuri [sons of Zeus's]—are little clouds which shine as a result of the motion."
14 J. H. Lesher, *Xenophanes of Colophon* (Toronto, Buffalo & London: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 137.
15 Fragment 14: "But mortals think that the gods are born, wear their own clothes, have voices and bodies." The source of this fragment is Clement, *Miscellanies* 5.109.
16 Fragment 16: "Ethiopians say that their gods are flat-nosed and black, and Thracians that theirs have blue eyes and red hair." The source of this fragment is Clement, *Miscellanies* 7.22.
17 Fragment 11: "Homer and Hesiod have ascribed to the gods all deeds which among men are a reproach and a disgrace: thieving, adultery and deceiving one another." The source of this fragment is Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 9.193 (= *Against the Physicists* 1.193).
18 LHP 1: 248; Hegel, *Werke* 18: 283.
19 For Xenophanes's "naturalistic inquiry," see, in particular, Testimonium 33 (the source of it is Hippolytus's *Refutations* I, 14, 5), which offers a cosmogony combining empirical observation and theoretical speculation. For a recent discussion of this, see Michael Papazian, "Gods and Fossils: Inference and Scientific Method in Xenophanes's Philosophy," in *Philosopher Kings and Tragic Heroes*, ed. Heather L. Reid and Davide Tanasi (Sioux City, Iowa: Parnassos Press, 2016). On eclipses, see Testimonium 41a: "Xenophanes (said that) there were many suns and moons throughout the regions, sections, and zones of the earth, and at a certain time the disk drops into some section of the earth not inhabited by us and so, like stepping into a hole, makes the eclipse (or sunset) appear. He also says that the sun goes onward indefinitely, but appears to go in a circle because of the distance." The source of this fragment is Aetius II, 24, 9.
20 Translation by J. H. Lesher, in Lesher, *Xenophanes of Colophon*. The source of this fragment is Theodoretus, *Treatment of Greek Conditions* 4.5.
21 The source of this fragment is Philoponus, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 1.5.125.
22 The source of this fragment is Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 10.314 (= *Against the Physicists* 2.314).
23 See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 983b8–11ff.
24 See the dual-*archē* reading of earth/water in Lesher, *Xenophanes of Colophon*, 133.
25 See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.3 (984a6–984a11). Mansfeld notes that in *Metaphysics* Book I.8, 989a5f., Aristotle "states that none of the materialist monists made earth the principle (contrast Xenophanes fragment 27), and he does not list Xenophanes among the materialist dualists either (contrast fragments 29 & 33). Earth, he says, was first added by Empedocles to the three elements he took over from the monists (*Metaphysics* A 3, 984a8f.); however, at *Physics* B 1, 193a21, he lists 'earth' among the elements assumed by individual early thinkers," 110n4. See Jaap Mansfeld, "Aristotle and Others on Thales, or the Beginnings of Natural Philosophy. With Some Remarks on Xenophanes," *Mnemosyne* 38 (1985): 109–129. Stokes comments: "The fragments of Xenophanes

proves false Aristotle's generalization that none of the *phusikoi* made earth the *archē*." See Michael C. Stokes, *One and Many in Presocratic Philosophy* (Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 1971), 49. Hegel's *Lectures*, of course, cite Aristotle's view in dismissing the "speculative significance" of these fragments: LHP 1: 248; *Werke* 18: 284.

26 LHP 1: 248; Hegel, *Werke* 18: 284.

27 Cherniss makes this point as follows: "Aristotle did not envisage the possibility that the problems with which earlier thinkers were concerned may have been different from his own. He was concerned with their opinions as varying approximations to an expression of the truth which is . . . his own philosophical system . . . as the full flowering of what they contained in seed and had manifested only partially and imperfectly." See "The History of Ideas and Ancient Greek Philosophy," in Harold Cherniss, *Selected Papers*, ed. Leonardo Tarán (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), 41–42.

28 Aristotle credits only Anaxagoras and Empedocles with introducing a source of motion/change independent of the material *archē*, and yet, very clearly, Xenophanes's god, who "effortlessly shakes all things by thinking with his mind" (Fragment 25), operates as an *archē tēs kinēseōs*. Aristotle does appear to modify his sketch of the development of Presocratic philosophy when he then says, in *Metaphysics* I.4, that "the thinkers up to the time of Empedocles appear to have touched upon two of the causes which we distinguished in the *Physics*, the material cause and the cause of change/motion, but lightly and not at all clearly [*amudrōs mentoi kai outhen saphōs*], as untrained men box in fights . . . nor do the above thinkers seem to understand what they are saying [*oute houtoi eoikasin eidenai ho ti legousin*], for they appear to use the two causes occasionally and to a small extent" (985a11–985a18).

29 Arguing against Vlastos's view that, for the Milesians, something just *is* whatever it comes *from*, Stokes contends: "it is not clear that the *only* basis for the pronouncement that all things were made of earth and water was the supposition that all things arise out of earth and water. Xenophanes makes both pronouncements, that we come from earth and water and that all things are earth and water; there is nothing to show that the one type of pronouncement is sufficient support for the other" (Stokes, 40–41). For an account of the "from-which of manifestation," as an alternative to the familiar idea of the "from-which of composition" see John Sallis, "Doubles of Anaximenes," in *The Presocratics After Heidegger*, ed. David C. Jacobs (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999).

30 The source of this fragment is Stobaeus, *Physical Selections* 1.8.2.

31 See the scholarly debate over Theodor Gomperz's 1896 translation of Fragment 18 in Paul Shorey, "Note on Xenophanes Fr. 18 (Diels) and Isocrates Panegyricus 32," *Classical Philology* 6 (1911): 88–89; W. J. Verdenius, "Xenophanes Frag. 18," *Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series 8 (1955): 221; J. H. Loenen, "In Defence of the Traditional Interpretation of Xenophanes Frag. 18," *Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series 9 (1956): 135–136; and Alexander Tulin, "Xenophanes Fr. 18 D.-K. and the Origins of the Idea of Progress," *Hermes* 121 (1993): 129–138.

32 On *ameinon* in Fragment 18, see Lesher: "Since the neuter accusative singular of the comparative form of an adjective serves also as the comparative of the adverb, *ameinon* is ambiguous between 'find a better (thing)' and 'find out better.'" See *Xenophanes of Colophon*, 150.

33 Schäfer notes that the contrast between the aorist *hypedeixan* and the present *epheuriskousin* intensifies the temporal character of the human seeking, over against the absent divine revelation: see Christian Schäfer, *Xenophanes von Kolophon: Ein Vorsokratiker zwischen Mythos und Philosophie* (Stuttgart & Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1996), 123. Lesher convincingly argues against the "progressivist" interpretation of Fragment 18. See J. H. Lesher, "Xenophanes on

Inquiry and Discovery: An Alternative to the 'Hymn to Progress's Reading of Fr. 18," *Ancient Philosophy* 11 (1991): 229–248.

34 The source of this fragment is Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians*, VII, 49 & 110.

35 The source of this fragment is Clement, *Miscellanies* 5.109.

36 The source of this fragment is Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 9.144 (= *Against the Physicists* 1.144).

37 The source of this fragment is Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 23.19.

38 The source of this fragment is Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 23.10.

39 See, for example, the Xenophanean "guidelines" (*tupoi*) for theology set forth by Plato's Socrates in *Republic*, Book Two—namely, first, that "the divine is not the cause of all things but only of the good" (380c), and second, that the gods do not undergo change or "mislead us with lies in word or in deed" (383a). Morgan comments: "Genuine divinity engages in neither [deception nor change], for it is perfect and true as it is. If the first rule recalls Xenophanes, this one recalls Parmenides as well, along with the notion of changelessness . . . The two rules are hints in the direction of such a theology, in which the divine is somewhat depersonalized and yet maintains its goodness and perfection. This passage identifies a stage on a line that stretches from Xenophanes and Parmenides to the *Timaeus* and the *Laws*, and from there to *Physics* VIII, *De Caelo*, *Metaphysics* XII and beyond." See Michael L. Morgan, *Platonic Piety: Philosophy and Ritual in Fourth-Century Athens* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1990), 115.

40 Hegel writes in the *Lectures*: "By this Xenophanes denied the truth of the conceptions of origination and of passing away, of change, movement, etc., seeing that they only belong to sensuous perception." LHP 1: 243; Hegel, *Werke* 18: 278.

41 LHP 1: 23; Hegel, *Werke* 18: 42.

42 LHP 1: 94; Hegel, *Werke* 18: 116.

43 See, for example, fragment 8 from Parmenides, lines 39–41, where he characterizes the opinions of mortals in terms of "coming to be and perishing, being and not being, changing place and altering in bright color." Simplicius goes on to comment, in the source text for fragment 8: "Parmenides effects the transition from the objects of reason to the objects of sense [*metelthōn de apo tōn noētōn epi ta aisthēta*], or, as he himself puts it, from truth to opinion, when he writes: 'Here I end my trustworthy discourse and thought concerning truth; henceforth learn the beliefs of mortal men, listening to the deceitful ordering of my words"—*in Phys*. 146, 23. The translation is that in Kirk, Raven & Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*.

44 LHP 1: 89; Hegel, *Werke* 18: 110; Haldane's translation altered.

45 LHP 1: 88; Hegel, *Werke* 18: 109.

46 LHP 1: 90; Hegel, *Werke* 18: 111.

47 LHP 1: 87–88; Hegel, *Werke* 18: 108–109.

48 LHP 1: 88; Hegel, *Werke* 18: 109. Compare Hegel's discussion of Plato's myths in volume 2 of the *Lectures*: "Many philosophical claims, it is true, are made more easily intelligible by being presented in mythical form; nevertheless, that is not the true way of presenting them. Philosophical claims are thoughts which, in order to be pure, must be brought forward as such. The myth is always a mode of presentation which . . . introduces sensuous images that are directed to imagination, not to thought. . . .[A]s it takes away from the purity of thought through sensuous content, it cannot express the meaning of thought." LHP 2 19–20; *Werke* 19: 29–30—Haldane's translation altered.

49 LHP 1: 87; Hegel, *Werke* 18: 108.

50 LHP 1: 88; Hegel, *Werke* 18: 109.
51 Fragment 15: "If cows and horses or lions had hands . . . horses would have drawn horse-like gods, cows cow-like gods, and each species would have made the gods' bodies just like their own." The source of this fragment is Clement, *Miscellanies* 5.110.
52 Admittedly, such an interpretation is strongly motivated though not necessitated by fragment 23 and its idea of a god not at all like mortals in body or thought.
53 Kirk, Raven & Schofield, comment on fragment 38 as follows: "For Xenophanes the observation about honey (which may have been proverbial) presumably confirmed his beliefs about the limitation of knowledge—again the contrast between god, or gods, and men is conspicuously present," *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 180.
54 Provocatively, Heidegger addresses the "not yet" operating in Hegel's approach to Greek philosophy, when he writes: "Within the horizon of speculative idealism, the philosophy of the Greeks remains in the 'not yet' of its completion . . . [T]he philosophy of the Greeks shows itself to our thinking too in a 'not yet.' But this is the 'not yet' of the unthought—not a 'not yet' that does not satisfy us, but rather a 'not yet' to which *we* are not sufficient, and which *we* fail to satisfy." See Heidegger, "Hegel and the Greeks," 336.
55 See my interpretation of Plato's *Statesman*, and in particular its critique of syngrammatic writing, as continuous with Xenophanes's conception of human *zētein*, in Robert Metcalf, "Syngrammatology in Plato's *Statesman*," in *Plato's* Statesman: *Dialectic, Myth, and Politics*, ed. John Sallis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017).

# 2 On the Speculative Significance of Anaxagoras in Hegel's Lectures

*Andrew Alexander Davis*

## 1. Introduction

Little has been written on Hegel's reading of Anaxagoras in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* no doubt because little of consequence seems to take place in it.[1] One might expect a substantial encounter with Anaxagoras, given Hegel's praise for Anaxagoras's *nous* (intellect) in the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, introduction to the *Science of Logic*, and throughout his lectures.[2] Hegel champions *nous* as an early intimation of his own Concept (*Begriff*). *Nous*, like the Concept, is self-determining activity.[3] Moreover, Anaxagoras's *nous* is the first concrete result of Hegel's history of philosophy.[4] For Hegel, *nous* represents the pinnacle of early Greek philosophy and the transition to classical Athenian thought. Given the importance of Aristotle for Hegel's thinking, and given the important role Anaxagoras seems to play in preparing the ground for Aristotle, we might expect a detailed investigation of *nous* in relation to Anaxagoras's cosmogony in Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*.[5] But this is not what we find.

Despite praising Anaxagoras for considering *nous* as cause, Hegel agrees with Plato's Socrates and Aristotle that the details of Anaxagoras's writings are a disappointment. Accordingly, he gives them little consideration. It is worth noting that Hegel may have worked from a collection of Presocratic writings that contained no fragments from Anaxagoras: *Poesis Philosophica*, first published in Geneva in 1573.[6] Yet, such a material shortfall is hardly sufficient to explain the cursory nature of the treatment of Anaxagoras's cosmogony. Here as elsewhere in the lectures, Hegel relies on ancient sources: Plato, Aristotle, Diogenes and Plutarch. These alone would have given him ample Anaxagorean material to discuss. In any case, since Hegel read Simplicius's commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* (which is certain given Hegel's frequent references to Simplicius in his lectures), he would have encountered the single most important source for the current collections of fragments from Anaxagoras, rendering the argument that Hegel had no significant access to Anaxagoras's writings unconvincing.[7] Hegel has another reason to disregard the details of the transmitted texts: the authority of Plato and Aristotle and the persuasive arguments they give against the coherence

of Anaxagoras's view. Plato's Socrates and Aristotle both report interest in Anaxagoras's *nous* and disappointment with how he applies *nous*.

The first sign of the problem in Anaxagoras's account is that he requires two heterogeneous first principles: the one *nous* and the infinite seeds. Hegel notes that these two principles are not brought together into a speculative unity.[8] Instead of solving the problem of the One and the Many, Anaxagoras simply reproduces it at the most fundamental level of his ontology.[9] Second, Anaxagoras hints at a non-physical cause for things (*nous*), but his *nous* only works in a physical way. According to his cosmogony, *nous* merely rotates the cosmos, thus allowing like seeds to find each other by their own likeness.[10] Any number of other non-intelligent causes could be said to rotate the cosmos. Hegel notes that *nous* "is merely what binds and separates."[11] Thus, *nous* turns out to be "formal" and "contentless."[12]

Given Anaxagoras's failure, from the point of view of later Greek philosophy, to produce a consistent, compelling view of the whole, what can we learn from Anaxagoras, according to Hegel? Hegel finds inventive ways to bring across the content of *nous* in spite of Anaxagoras's own contentless account. Hegel's lecture is a clear example of spirit triumphing over letter. It takes us to the heart of our discomfort with Hegel, to the place where we encounter Hegel's thought as willful distortion rather than scholarly duty. Yet if we do not presume the value of the scholar's mode, can we grasp the method here?

Hegel's account of Anaxagoras's writings is cursory. He does not even use what was probably Anaxagoras's own term, *spermata* (seeds) for his non-noetic causes, but refers to them generically as *stoicheia* (elements) or, more often, following Aristotle, *homoiomera* (like parts). By stark contrast, Hegel's account of Anaxagoras's life is lively and stocked with telling tangents. Hegel also offers a long digression that relates *nous* to purpose or end (*Zweck*) in order to demonstrate how objective thinking works, even though nothing in Anaxagoras's writing specifically indicates purposiveness. Looking closely at these rather unexpected emphases reveals several important aspects of Hegel's approach to ancient Greek philosophy. Before we turn to Anaxagoras's life, however, we should provide some context by considering his place in Hegel's account of the progression of early Greek philosophy.

## 2. Anaxagoras's Place among Early Greek Thinkers

The early Greek thinkers from Thales to Anaxagoras unearth increasingly fundamental thoughts. Hegel outlines six steps. We begin with (1) Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, followed by (2) the Pythagoreans, (3) the Eleatics, (4) Heraclitus, (5) Empedocles, Leucippus and Democritus, and (6) Anaxagoras. The general and "unmistakable" progression here is from the most abstract thought of the absolute as one kind of physical substance (water) to the most concrete thought of the absolute as *nous*.[13]

Each new principle in the progression is more ideal than the last.[14] From water to number to being to becoming to friendship/strife to atom/void, each successive principle is more removed from sensuous shape than the last. Each successive principle approaches, more and more nearly, the activity of thinking itself. The thought of the One gradually approaches the thinking activity that thinks the world as One. To arrive at some explicit thematization of thinking itself is the *Zweck* of early Greek philosophy. Anaxagoras, despite his faults, gives clear shape and purpose to the whole movement, turning it from a mere process (which we have in Heraclitus) into a sentient development.

Stages 1–3 involve a progressive constitution of being, the proper first object of philosophy as such. In stage 4, being turns over into becoming. Heraclitus's becoming is then further determined as the interaction of Empedocles's six elements. While friendship and strife are ideal principles, even activities, the four elements still present determinate physical principles as causes. Democritus's principles, atom and void, are more ideal. Though we tend to think of atomism as a naive or hardheaded materialism, Hegel recognizes that this is not the case. Atom and void are principles with no obvious sensory correlate—unlike, for instance, fire and water. Atom and void offer an idealized binary opposition, the purest opposition for thinking so far. In short, atom and void are the product of non-sensuous, or non-representational thinking. We are just one step away from thematizing that thinking itself. Anaxagoras will take this step.

Hegel's decision to put Anaxagoras after the atomists is revealing. Democritus (b. 460 BCE) was almost certainly younger than Anaxagoras (b. ca. 500 BCE) and he was surely active long after Anaxagoras's death. Moreover, Democritus's atoms could be seen as an improvement on Anaxagoras infinite seeds in a number of ways. The void functions as a condition for possible movement and so does the work of Anaxagoras's *nous*, without suggesting some further capability for intelligent planning that is not utilized. Looking back from modern theories that bear some relation to ancient atomism, one could even claim a teleological right for the atomists. But Hegel has a different story to tell. His story is about thinking's self-knowing, and Anaxagoras's *nous* gives us more in this regard than anything we can find among the atomists. If Hegel chose atomism as the bridge from early Greek to classical Athenian thought, his history would look quite different.

Despite his failures, Anaxagoras earns a preeminent position among early Greek philosophers for thematizing *nous*. Even if other early thinkers like Heraclitus offer us significantly more in writing that is worthy of consideration, Anaxagoras is without peer simply because he turns our attention in the proper direction. There is some irony in Hegel's account of Anaxagoras: the Ionian, unaware of what he is doing, turns us toward self-awareness.

Hegel compares Heraclitus's thinking to the first solid ground, to the first landfall in the history of philosophy. This is a strange image for the philosopher of flux. Hegel seems to mean that, before Heraclitus, philosophers put

forward positions. Heraclitus gives us the first view of truth as process, his is first thinking that embraces the conflict of multiple moments, multiple positions. Thus, Heraclitus is the first philosopher to think being as movement. Because thinking is itself movement, it finds solid ground in the representation of being as movement, i.e., becoming. This is a major speculative achievement and Hegel appreciates it as such. But while Heraclitus exhibits everywhere a keen comprehension of the dialectical nature of thinking, he never thematizes this movement as the nature of thinking itself. Heraclitus enjoins us to consider *Logos*, but not *nous*.

Hegel compares Anaxagoras's thinking to light dawning. Hegel is giving us his own creation story here: first philosophy made land in Heraclitus's harmony of opposites and then light dawned on that land as the self-awareness of *nous*. (This inverts the order from the book of Genesis, where light comes before land.) Though Heraclitus shows himself to be a remarkable individual, rejecting convention, politics and despising his countrymen to such an extent that Hegel likens him to a modern in this respect, his thinking does not emphasize *Geist* (in any of its guises) as a cause or principle. Though Hegel finds much to admire in Heraclitus and little to criticize, this may be because Heraclitus does not clearly engage the field of battle where pre-modern, pre-Christian thinkers are so disadvantaged: the nature of subjectivity. It is Anaxagoras who breaks the silence of the early Greek philosophers: "In everything there is a portion of everything except *nous*, and there are some things in which there is *nous* also."[15]

Hegel begins his lecture on Anaxagoras with high praise: Anaxagoras brings the first dawning of light in the history of philosophy. He goes on: Anaxagoras is like a sober man among drunks, like a fencer among men swinging wildly. Hegel pulls these images from Aristotle and applies them to Anaxagoras even though only the first is meant by Aristotle to apply to him. Yet the second fits, on Hegel's reading, because turning to *nous* as cause is the first strike on the real target of philosophy: thinking itself.

The general theme of Hegel's lecture on Anaxagoras is that it is important to emphasize objective thinking as Anaxagoras does and was the first to do.[16] Objective thinking is thinking not as a private affair but as cause of things being the way they are. Objective thinking is thinking as cause not merely of appearances (as in Kant's transcendental idealism), but of being. Grasping Hegel's absolute idealism, which depends on grasping the objectivity of thinking, has proven challenging for professional scholars and amateurs alike, and one could hope that Hegel's account of Anaxagoras might provide a key.

By the time Hegel has finished his comments on Anaxagoras's thought, however, we are justified in wondering what Hegel was praising. Aside from simply mentioning *nous* as a cause, Anaxagoras seems to contribute nothing determinate. His thought, which promises so much by naming *nous* as cause, proves a disappointment to Plato's Socrates in the *Phaedo*, to Aristotle, and to Hegel. Hegel dutifully runs through the other cause of things,

the *homoiomera*, but he seems to be doing his duty as a lecturer here, not describing something essential to the self-development of the Concept. When it comes to Hegel's account of Anaxagoras's life, however, the situation is different. I suggest that this is not merely by chance, nor is it a sign that Hegel is so desperate for content that he stoops to gathering what he can from biography. Instead, the actual lives of the Greek philosophers take on a special interest for us because in ancient Greece, subjectivity is still "contingent" and bound up with "natural life." Hegel remarks:

> in the Greek world only a few persons are free; for the [eternal] subject matter [*Sache*] is defined in such a way that subjectivity stands over against it and still bears the marks of natural life and contingency . . . In other words, most important among the Greeks are individuals who are virtuosos of art and poetry, of science, of integrity and virtue and so forth.[17]

In the ancient Greek world, *Geist* expresses itself in and through individual geniuses, not a whole people or a universal method. To grasp *Geist* among the Greeks we must make ourselves at home in the contingencies of their lives and learn to see the necessity of the Concept in them.

## 3. The Speculative Significance of Anaxagoras's Life

In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel tends to briefly introduce the general themes he will highlight in a thinker's work, then give a short biographical sketch followed by an account of their writings, treated according to his own systematic triad of Logic, Philosophy of Nature, and Philosophy of Spirit if possible. In Anaxagoras's case, Hegel finds the Concept more at work in Anaxagoras's life than in his words. Hegel makes no attempt to excavate system from Anaxagoras's cosmogony. Rather, he aims to reveal the speculative dimension of Anaxagoras's thought through a consideration of (1) his travel to Athens, (2) the accusation of impiety he met there, and (3) the connection between *nous* and teleology. This might seem arbitrary or willful, an instance of Hegel simply inventing content to suit his larger purpose. However, Hegel's interest in Anaxagoras's life is not arbitrary. In ancient Greece, philosophy is not a universally available activity, because it resides only with individual geniuses. For this reason, it is bound up with the contingencies of their lives. Hegel's interest centers on Anaxagoras's relationship with Athens, for Anaxagoras was the first philosopher to travel to and settle there.[18] Thus, his life enacts the passing of the torch from Ionia to Athens.

This travel from east to west is the clearest illustration of the crucial turn initiated by Anaxagoras: Anaxagoras begins the turn from 'objective' causes to 'subjective' causes in the history of philosophy. While *nous* is still considered something "out there" that, like the infinite or love and strife, is

responsible for things being the way they are, the very name *nous* turns us inward to look at our own intellect as a reflection of the objective thinking that arranged the cosmos. Anaxagoras himself need not have been aware that this inward turn would ignite a new kind of philosophy in Athens, first among sophists and then with Socrates and his students. In the wake of Anaxagoras's arrival there, human beings become the center of philosophical inquiry. By comparison, the earlier Eleatic and Ionian philosophies appear cold and distant.

Hegel finds this conceptual movement from objective causes to subjective causes to be the speculative significance of Anaxagoras's journey west to Athens. For this reason, Hegel goes in to some detail about the difference between Athens and Sparta. Hegel highlights the more moderate nature of Athenian democracy that gave greater room for subjectivity, for the expression of the individual: "each citizen had his own substantial consciousness in unity with the laws, with the state; but individuality, the spirit and thought of the individual, was at the same time allowed free rein to develop, to confirm, express, and indulge itself. In Athens, the principle of subjective freedom comes to the fore in all its vigor."[19] Anaxagoras came to Athens and brought the natural-philosophical inquiry of the Ionian east to the subjective freedom born in the west. Hegel notes: "in Anaxagoras we see the foundation of this principle of subjectivity, but a foundation that is still quite general. He lived somewhat earlier than Socrates, though Socrates was acquainted with him. In this time of flowering, the principle of which we just noted, he came to Athens."[20]

Anaxagoras lays the foundation for the work of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Before him, the freedom of subjectivity in Athens was expressed in culturally dependent forms: poetry and history. Through the objectivity of Ionian natural philosophy fused with the principle of subjectivity, Anaxagoras allows philosophy to emerge in a distinctive Athenian form that liberates itself from these cultural dependencies. Athens will humanize the austere thinking of Ionia, but direct contact with Ionia through Anaxagoras will elevate Athens's fledgling culture of freedom and subjectivity to a universal form. Anaxagoras's journey to Athens is, therefore, of profound significance for the history of philosophy. The figure of Anaxagoras helps us grasp the concept of classical Greek philosophy, with its blend of subjective freedom and objective thinking.

The accusation of impiety against Anaxagoras is the first in a line of similar accusations made by the Athenians against Socrates and Aristotle. Anaxagoras's life is in this respect prophetic; it bears in it the seed of later philosophical lives in Athens. While in Athens, Anaxagoras is accused of "despising the gods."[21] Anaxagoras thinks of the sun and planets as natural bodies not gods. Why is this so important? Hegel connects the de-spiritualizing of external things with the in-spiriting of *Geist*. This further develops his previous point about the inwardizing, subjective direction of Athenian

culture. Making outside beings into mere things goes hand in hand with becoming self-aware:

> 'Thing' [*Ding*] can be derived from 'thinking' [*Denken*]. What thinking does essentially is to hunt down those objects and representations that we may call divine or poetic, together with the whole range of superstition, and demote them all to the level of what we call natural things. It is precisely in thinking that spirit knows itself as the truly subsistent identity of itself and actual being. For the spirit that knows itself in its actuality, what is unspiritual or external downgrades itself to the level of the negation of spirit, of something devoid of spirit, of the prosaic, at the level of things.[22]

Thus, Hegel argues that Anaxagoras's so-called atheism is the truest proof of his thinking, the very thinking brought into question by his cosmogony that seems to make poor use of *nous* as cause. Hegel depicts the real activity of *nous* here, not the centrifugal *nous* that spins the infinite variety of seeds, but the *nous* that, aware of itself, negates the superstitions that make it unfree. Anaxagoras's life and action gives us deeper insight into *nous*-at-work than his writings do.

Moreover, the accusation of impiety reveals a tension between the dawning of the light of reason and the still contingent nature of *Geist* among the Athenians. Isolated individuals are capable of thinking, but not the Athenians as a people. Today, we take for granted that the sun is not a god. For us, this kind of self-awareness that demystifies the world and asserts its freedom against superstition is our birthright. One need not be particularly perceptive, let alone a genius, to participate in this rational culture of self-awareness. But for an Athenian to rise above cultural dependence in matters of religion took force of character; it took genius. Thus, we see only isolated individuals rise to the recognition of themselves as *Geist*: as infinite, as self-relating, as thinking. As we will see, this carries profound implications for Hegel's interpretation of Greek philosophy. Individual Greek thinkers are not necessarily further from the truth than individual moderns. Where the developmental advance of the history of philosophy can be most clearly seen is in how widespread rational principles become through laws, customs, and institutions. What takes a lifetime of genius for an Athenian becomes a child's homework in the nineteenth century. Philosophical development is measured not by the depth of this or that thinker, but by the universal access to philosophical insights such as the non-divinity of the stars.

Anaxagoras's life, with its journey west and its trial for impiety, is paradigmatic of the struggle to bring forth the light of reason. It is also indicative of the contingent nature of *Geist* among the Greeks that he was forced from Athens. This shows us a limitation on the need for genius. If *Geist* is at home only with geniuses, it is not yet truly at home with a whole people. *Geist*,

though it has glimpsed its nature as thinking, could not realize itself in any lasting or universal way in Athens. Nevertheless, Anaxagoras was right: *nous* is the cause of things being the way they are. His own writing speaks less of this truth than his life does.

## 4. *Nous* and Purpose

Anaxagoras's writings barely hint at the true speculative depth of *nous*. His life offers us more insight, particularly the trial for atheism. Yet even this is not enough to show the significance of *nous* for the philosophical tradition. Immediately following the biographical portion of his lecture, Hegel makes the meaning of *nous* more explicit by considering *nous* as *Zweck*. Final causes or purposes are not a feature of Anaxagoras's thought as recorded. In fact, "purpose" is exactly what Socrates expected and failed to find in Anaxagoras's account of a cosmos shaped by *nous* (*Phaedo* 97C99E). Thus, Hegel seems to be engaged in a questionable practice of supplying Anaxagoras with everything he should have said. We must pause to consider what Hegel reveals about his aims through such open disregard, one might even say contempt, for historical accuracy.

Hegel uses Anaxagoras as a window onto the emergence of eternal truth in time. The emphasis here is not on time, which is merely the vehicle, but on the eternity of thinking, the eternity of *Geist*, which shines through historical contingency. As such, Hegel's histories are closer to religious history, to recounting, for example, the generations of Adam. It would be small minded to disregard Christianity because of factual errors in its chronicles: a greater truth is at work. What is the greater truth at work through Anaxagoras? Hegel writes:

> Anaxagoras recognized *nous* as the absolute—thinking, understanding, reason. This principle is very important. It is the principle of self-determining activity, not that of being nor that of the becoming of Heraclitus, which is only process. What is at once contained in it is that, in setting itself in motion, or in constituting process, this activity maintains itself as the self-identical universal.[23]

This means that *nous* is, in principle, purposive. *Nous* is the "self-identical universal," i.e., *nous* has itself as its own purpose. Purpose, Hegel argues, is usually understood as subjective purpose, as an intended plan. But Hegel calls to mind a deeper sense of purpose: the purpose at work in all living beings to maintain themselves as such through voluntary and involuntary activity.

> In every impulse that we satisfy or realize, we posit its subjective element objectively, while the objective is in turn transformed into what is subjective. This self-determining activity, which is active upon another

> too, which posits itself in the antithesis but in turn negates it, masters it, and in this activity takes itself back into itself or reflects itself upon itself—this self-determining activity is *nous*, it is thinking.[24]

Hegel notes that even the simplest mechanical and chemical processes are harnessed by living beings for their own ends. In a living being, externalizing processes are "inverted" to serve for the preservation and continuation of itself. The result of self-determining activity is the being "that already existed." Even the most external aspect of the living being is still inwardly directed. The animal's purpose and activity produce only one thing: itself. The true meaning of *Zweck* is *Selbstzweck* (self-purpose, self-end).[25] This *Selbstzweck* is Hegel's way of discussing one of the achievements of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: *ousia* (independent being) is *to ti ēn einai* (the what it is to be). To be something is to be the source and end of oneself in an ongoing way. Here then, the true meaning of objective thinking is to be found. We grasp thinking's objectivity when we grasp all purposiveness, even unconscious self-maintenance like breathing and digesting, as self-directed activity, as the self-identical universal and therefore as end-directed *nous*, as thinking. Hegel imports this significance into his lectures on Anaxagoras by an analysis of *nous* itself, making no use of Anaxagoras's own discussions of *nous*.

Hegel both emphasizes and elevates Anaxagoras's role in the history of philosophy in order to bring out a story of philosophy that privileges purpose and thinking, two themes explicit in Aristotle's work. Hegel's history of ancient Greek philosophy culminates in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, and every decision Hegel makes seeks the best, the clearest path from Thales to Aristotle. By highlighting Anaxagoras's life in Athens and the connection between *nous* and purpose, Hegel shows his students that the value of Anaxagoras's *nous* can be appreciated only retrospectively. Without looking forward to Aristotle's account of the soul, we are stuck with only a partial thought of *nous* that cannot explain or justify itself. Anaxagoras has no independent value; his stated views are incomplete and one-sided. Thus, Anaxagoras is not the true subject of Hegel's lecture on Anaxagoras—but then no philosopher is ever the true subject of philosophy.

## 5. Conclusion: Hegel on Greek Philosophy

Hegel's relationship to ancient Greek philosophy is difficult to assess. Though the general stages of conceptual development in Hegel's history of philosophy are clear, his assessment of individual thinkers often disrupts any clear sense of historical progress. For example, no other thinker accrues the praise and respect Hegel gives to Aristotle, "one of the most richly endowed geniuses there ever has been."[26] No thinker (until Hegel himself) comes as close to adequately handling the immanent, self-developing, speculative concept. While post-Aristotelian philosophers are gradually preparing the

full self-awareness of *Geist*, they do so while taking many significant steps back on a host of important philosophical concerns. Hegel remarks that in the modern era the proper Aristotelian concept of life "has gotten lost."[27] Likewise, Hegel reports that no modern psychology has yet matched the speculative depth of Aristotle's writings on the soul.[28] This is particularly important because the supposed limitation on ancient Greek philosophy generally, and thus Aristotle's thinking as well, is that "subjectivity appears still to be contingent."[29] How can ancient subjectivity be merely contingent if Aristotle's psychology is so penetrating?

How are we to understand Hegel's superlative praise for Aristotle against his idea of a developmental history of philosophy that parallels his Logic? Alfredo Ferrarin, in the most substantial treatment of the subject, proceeds by sacrificing Hegel's own idea of developmental history. He remarks that Hegel "could not follow the idea he advances."[30] Conveniently, this dismisses the part of Hegel's project that most substantially challenges our own academic prejudices. Today, we often treat epochs and thinkers as each legitimate in their own way. Today's scholars emphasize pluralism, not hierarchy or teleology. But neither Aristotle nor Hegel is shy about asserting the superiority of one principle over another.

It is more charitable to work from the hypothesis that we may still misunderstand what Hegel intends by what Ferrarin calls "parallelism" between the history of philosophy and the *Science of Logic*. Is it possible to read the parallel course of Logic and history in such a way as to highlight both Aristotle's particular superiority over all other later philosophers and the limitations of Greek thought in general? I believe it is.

Hegel's relationship with ancient Greek philosophy can be illuminated by attention to his lectures on Anaxagoras. Above all, Hegel's interest in Anaxagoras's life, which overshadows his interest in Anaxagoras's writings, offers a telling clue as to how we might read the simultaneous greatness and limitation of ancient Greek philosophy. In Hegel's view, greatness can be achieved in ancient Greek philosophy only by isolated individuals singled out by fortunate circumstance. The portrait of Anaxagoras that emerges from Hegel's lectures is of a man who happens to stand at the crossroads of Ionian and Athenian thinking, a man who happens to divine the most powerful driving concept of the history of philosophy but hardly knows what to do with it. Anaxagoras's *nous* is an isolated flash of inspiration.

In Hegel's account of the ancient Greek world, drawn perhaps from Plato's dialogues, poets and rhapsodes are inspired by muses, great statesmen are unable to pass on any science of politics to their children or successors, and philosophers do not possess a method to provide widespread access to their thinking. The aristocratic nature of arts and sciences is a sign of their contingency. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the individual works or deeds of Homer, Pericles, or Anaxagoras are any less profound or "advanced" than the works and deeds of Shakespeare, Napoleon or Descartes. It means only that the greatness of the ancient Greek world occurs

by chance intersections of powerful minds and events, not a self-aware (and thus repeatable and universal) method.

The intervening historical developments of Christianity and modernity prepare philosophy for a universal expression that transcends the genius of individuals. This is a genuine advance for obvious reasons, but it is not so much a revelation of a new truth unseen by Aristotle as much as it is a widening of the road, an increase of access to truth. Unlike most modern philosophers, Hegel never rejects Aristotle's thinking. In Hegel's, view it has taken us two millennia to catch up to Aristotle's speculative genius, two millennia to make explicit the speculative idea Aristotle gestures toward, but lacks the method to realize as universal science.

In other words, Descartes need not be more philosophically advanced than Aristotle as an individual. He need only be part of a development that prepares for universal access to the ideas which Aristotle acquired through genius and taught, over centuries, to other men and women of like genius. Strange as it may sound, Hegel's system is supposed to make deep speculative truths more readily available and accessible to all educated human beings. Hegel's system aims to make knowledge universal, because it requires not talent but patience.[31] This, ultimately, is because Hegel begins with what is immediate (and so accessible to all) and proceeds without breaks or leaps to the speculative idea in its full realization as *Geist*. Here we should not let the fact that Hegel's books may be harder to read than Aristotle's occlude the possibility that his system of science may be easier to think as a whole.

As I see it, Hegel claims one distinct advantage over Aristotle: the universality of his method. Hegel remarks that Aristotle's formal logic is not the same as his speculative method.[32] Speculative method is never actually expressed in Aristotle's writings, though it is used throughout. This means that everything the method treats, every aspect of the idea from motion to life to soul to sensation to thinking to God, may be adequately handled by Aristotle individually. What is lacking is the presentation that leads through the idea step by step. Hegel claims to provide this and sees Christianity and modernity as necessary conditions for the possibility of this universally accessible method.

At this point, one might object that I am making Hegel's teleological history sound more like his early, quasi-Schellingian conception in the *Differenzschrift* that each philosophical system is complete in itself like a work of art.[33] If that were the case, I might just be saying that Hegel adds a method that leads through these otherwise independent absolutes. To be sure, by de-emphasizing a rigidly progressive structure we will, inevitably, invite this alternate vision of each thinker offering a parallel and equal expression of the Absolute. But I think Hegel is navigating between this model, which lacks development altogether, and the notion of history as the march of progress. When we attend to the details of Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, it is clear that his judgments about thinkers range widely in a manner most troublesome for the strict progressivist. Though a broad

developmental path from Thales to Schelling is unmistakable, the individual thinkers are nothing like stair steps, each improving on the other in some measurably regular way. They are rather, in Hegel's own image from the preface to the *Phenomenology* like the bud and blossom of a plant.[34] Each is vital, each in its way whole, but one replaces the other by making explicit what was merely implicit before. Just as some parts of a plant (such as the blossom) invite independent consideration as a culmination of prior activity, some stages are more appreciable as quasi-wholes, while others are really only appreciable as transitions.

Hegel's history is not progressive but developmental. It is not so much a compilation of philosophy's chronology as it is a "story of the idea." This reading of the history of philosophy parallels the political and religious history of human beings. Hegel is loath to say that the modern state is more beautiful than the ancient Greek *polis*. He does not say that he, as an individual, lives a better, more human life than Aristotle or Pericles. Yet Aristotle's leisure was made possible by slaves. Modern Europe advances beyond ancient Greece not in the beautiful autonomy of some individuals, but in increasingly universal access to freedom. Likewise, Christianity claims its advance over Judaism only according to the universality of its message; it is arguably the same God of Abraham that is revealed. The point is not that political life or art or philosophy is so much better in modernity, it is that education reaches more broadly, and access to self-aware, rational thinking is more widespread.

This is important to consider when Hegel remarks that the history of philosophy has only two vital moments, the ancient Greek and the modern German.[35] Hegel is clearly not aiming at pluralism or historical accuracy with such a claim. Instead, these two moments are the moments that show us the purpose or end, the *Zweck*, of philosophy most clearly: *nous*, self-determining activity, thinking. The remaining middle period, Hegel reports, is "fermentation."[36] The middle period of fermentation is vital, it is necessary, but it does not set the agenda. Root and fruit may reveal more to the amateur botanist than spathe or bract. A study of medieval thought does not reveal the inner purpose of philosophy as clearly as would a study of ancient Greek and modern German thought. While we study the whole development with Hegel, he invites us to pay special attention to these most revealing moments. Moreover, this sort of setting of priorities is a necessary consequence of reading the history of philosophy as a single whole.

Anaxagoras is vital to philosophy's development not because of his success, but because of his instructive failure: he cannot account for his own first principle and thus inspires Plato and Aristotle to succeed where he failed. For Hegel, Anaxagoras offers a crucial bridge between early Greek thinking and classical Athenian philosophy. Without him, we are at a loss to see the continuity between the thought of Empedocles and that of Socrates. I suspect that Hegel's task in the lectures on ancient Greek philosophy is twofold: first, to help us recognize the contingency of subjectivity in ancient

Greek thinking and, second, to prepare us to grasp Aristotle as a speculative thinker. Hegel's account of Anaxagoras's life accomplishes the first task and his account of *nous* as purpose accomplishes the second. Hegel may seem ambivalent, praising a thinker one moment only to criticize him the next. Here again, praise is a signal Hegel is preparing us for Aristotle, and censure is a sign that he is revealing the contingency of Greek subjectivity.

Grasping Aristotle's true speculative depth is by no means easy and Hegel's lectures on other philosophers before Aristotle offer helpful resources. The more usual story, in Hegel's day and our own, is that Aristotle is an empirical thinker. To Plato's pure forms, Aristotle counterposes the form-matter composite of sense experience. This common reading fails to grasp the speculative height of the *Noēsis Noēseōs* and the concomitant fact that Aristotle's grasp of empirical particulars is always "total," always a "synthesis."[37] That is, Aristotle never considers particulars apart from the meaningful whole that allows them to arise as particulars. This speculative dimension is not only evident at the summit of Aristotle's first philosophy, then, but visible in the appeal to real purposes throughout Aristotle's writings. By connecting Anaxagoras's *nous* to purposiveness, we learn something about how all purposes, even unconscious ones, are evidence of a kind of thinking, an indication of the speculative unity of thinking and being. Through this new awareness, we may see speculative reason at work in Aristotle's teleological accounts of breath, memory, reproduction, planetary movement, or habit formation. Hegel's disregard for Anaxagoras reveals his deep care for Aristotle. This care, in turn, gives us crucial insight into how to interpret the scope and aims of Hegel's System of Science, which closes, as we know, with a substantial quotation from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Book Lambda, Chapter 7.

## Notes

1 To my knowledge, only two works treat Hegel and Anaxagoras together: Gerhard Schmidt's "Hegel und Anaxagoras," in *Hegel und die Antike Dialektik*, ed. Manfred Riedel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1990), and Armin Hruby's dissertation *Nous und Kosmos* (Philosophische Fakultät: Köln, 1985). I do not share Schmidt's conviction that *Verstand* is the key to grasping nous. Hruby's work is a comprehensive summary of what Hegel and Aristotle say about Anaxagoras's nous. Hruby's work is detailed and helpful but tends to simply restate claims without analysis and highlights none of the strangeness in Hegel's account of Anaxagoras that I mean to explore here as an entry into questions about how Hegel works with ancient Greek philosophy.

2 See G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (henceforth *Werke*), eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), Vol. 3, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 54; *Werke* 5 (*Wissenschaft der Logik* I): 35, *Werke* 18 (*Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* I): 194.

3 Hegel, *Werke* 3: 54; Werke 18: 382.

4 Hegel, *Werke* 18: 124.

5 I worked closely with the Meiner *Vorlesungen* critical edition of the lectures culled from a single year (1825/26): G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* (henceforth VGP), ed. Pierre Garniron and Walter

Jaeschke, Vol. 6–8 (Hamburg: Meiner, 1994). I looked to the critical edition for a clue to overall structure and intention of the lecture and to the longer manuscript that appears in the Suhrkamp *Werke* (cobbled together from many different sources and years) for supplemental material.

6 Hruby, 98.
7 See, for example, Hegel, *Werke* 18: 191, 210, 212, 214, 281, 284, etc.
8 Hegel, *Werke* 18: 392.
9 We know from his lectures on Plato that Hegel saw a need to develop the many out of the one in an immanent way. See VGP 8: 36.
10 Daniel Graham, *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 291; Hermann Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, ed. W. Kranz, 3 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1956), B12.
11 Hegel, *Werke* 18: 391.
12 Hegel, *Werke* 18: 388. Hegel notes that the chemistry and natural science of his day has in fact slipped back to Anaxagoras's position (*Werke* 18: 388–389). He compares the *homoiomera* to oxygen, hydrogen and the other elements that are treated as basic kinds. These elements are organized by a blind formal principle that is itself contentless: natural law. Like Anaxagoras's nous, natural law orders matter but only externally.
13 VGP 7: 7.
14 VGP 7: 7–8.
15 Graham, 291; Diels, B11.
16 VGP 7: 93.
17 VGP 7: 4.
18 The exact dates of Anaxagoras's time in Athens are subject to debate. The dominant alternatives are ca. 480—ca. 450 and ca. 456—ca. 434. On the first set of dates, see Leonard Woodbury, "Anaxagoras and Athens," *Phoenix* 35 (1981): 295–315. On the second, see J. Mansfield, "The Chronology of Anaxagoras's Athenian Period and the Date of His Trial," *Mnemosyne* 33 (1980): 17–95. For discussion of the dating controversy see David Sider, *The Fragments of Anaxagoras*, Introduction, Text, and Commentary (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2005). For the quickest overview of textual issues and a good bibliography see Graham, 314 ff.
19 VGP 7: 95–96.
20 VGP 7: 96.
21 VGP 7: 97.
22 VGP 7: 97–98.
23 VGP 7: 99.
24 VGP 7: 99.
25 VGP 7: 100.
26 VGP 7: 65.
27 VGP 7: 76, VGP 7: 59.
28 Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften* (1830), §378.
29 VGP 7: 4.
30 Alfredo Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 43.
31 Hegel, *Werke* 3: 65; see also VGP 6: 276.
32 VGP 7: 98.
33 "Every philosophy is complete in itself, and like an authentic work of art, carries the totality within itself" (*Werke* 2:19).
34 Hegel, *Werke* 3: 12.
35 VGP 6: 275.
36 VGP 6: 275.
37 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 172.

# 3 Hegel on the Trial of Socrates and the End of Aesthetic Democracy

*Paul T. Wilford*

## 1. Introduction

Hegel describes Socrates's fate as "the highest tragedy" and, like poetic creations, the drama turns on a collision between individuals who embody irreconcilable principles, as each antagonist appeals to different conceptions of justice and right.[1] Socrates's trial is thus both "the highest injustice because he completely discharged his duties to his native land and opened up for his people an inner world," and "the highest justice" because Socrates's teaching appeared to the Athenian people as high treason and they correctly recognized "that respect for the law of the state would be weakened and the Athenian state destroyed by the principle that justification resides in one's own inwardness."[2] For Hegel, this conflict between locally situated, individuated entities bears a unique world-historical significance, for Socrates and Athens are the particulars that first express the tension between the principles of *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit*, which will be resolved only with the emergence of the modern state.[3] Socrates's fate thus reveals the principle that drives all of all human history: namely, that subjectivity must be free for itself in objectivity.[4]

While aspects of the connection between Socrates's conflict with Athens and the modern state have been explored by Richard Velkley, the historical episode has further ramifications for an understanding of Hegel's aesthetics, politics, and philosophy of history.[5] These come into focus when Hegel's treatment of Socrates is positioned against the context of German Philhellenism[6] and the post-Kantian search for holistic unity in two domains: the individual's relation to his cultural, political community and the relation between the ethical and the aesthetic domains of human experience.[7] Of the various responses to these two problems, Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) provides a particularly apt foil for Hegel's treatment of Socrates for three reasons. First, he relates the problem of the individual's relation to his spiritual community to the problem of the relation between beauty and morality. Second, he identifies in the Greek world an expression of the harmonious conjunction of morality, freedom, and beauty, and the individual with civic institutions. Finally, although Hegel disagrees with aspects of Schiller's

reading of the Greeks, he deeply admires his philosophic insight, remarking in the *Lectures on Fine Arts* that Schiller must be credited for breaking through the Kantian account of subjectivity, insisting on

> totality and reconciliation . . . as against that abstract endlessness of ratiocination, that duty for duty's sake . . . and for venturing an attempt to get beyond this by intellectually grasping the unity and reconciliation as the truth, and by actualizing them in artistic production.[8]

Moreover, Schiller provides an illuminating counterpart to Hegel, since, as Robert Pippin notes, "some commentators classify [Hegel] as a 'romantic,' along the lines of Schiller, and so try to equate a practically rational life with some sort of sensuous harmony with 'the whole.' "[9] Distinguishing Hegel's conception of the wholeness of ethical rationality available within modern political institutions from Schiller's Hellenic ideal illuminates the mode of reconciliation available at the culmination of spirit's realization.

Appropriating and modifying Kantian theses, Schiller thought that the pleasure of aesthetic experience in art could convey moral ideas, provide an aesthetic education for the people as a whole, and thus further the Enlightenment ambition of universal improvement through education. Rather than austere imperatives opposed to our sensuous side, art might provide a means for a harmonious synthesis of our apparently dual nature. Contrary to Kant's insistence that beauty is a subjective feature of the observer's experience, Schiller argues that beauty is an objective principle.[10] Beauty is the sensuous expression of self-determination of the individual object, i.e., "freedom in appearance, autonomy in appearance."[11]

Schiller unites what Kant treated as distinct domains of human activity, grounded on the atemporal, transcendental structure of particular faculties. In the eighteenth letter of *Aesthetic Education*, Schiller describes the attempt to unite matter and spirit, the sensuous with the supersensuous through an *Aufhebung* of each in our experience of the beautiful. Schiller moves beyond the limits of Kant's transcendental idealism conceptually and by "introducing an additional anthropological and historical foundation."[12] But, for Schiller, this is not just a theoretical problem about how to conceptualize a domain of experience; it pertains to the possible realization of a holistic individual—"the beautiful soul" (*die schöne Seele*). First described in *On Grace and Dignity* (1793), Schiller's ideal is one in which "sensuality and reason, duty and inclination are harmonized, and grace is its expression in appearance."[13] To attain such an ideal, however, requires spiritual cultivation (*Bildung*), a portrait of which Schiller develops in his *Aesthetic Education*, wherein the Greek world, juxtaposed with modern man's discontent and disharmony, provides an "image of unalienated and unfragmented life."[14]

Schiller presents "Greek nature" as uniting "all the attractions of art and all the dignity of wisdom."[15] "At once philosophic and creative," the Greeks

united "the youthfulness of fantasy with the manliness of reason in splendid humanity."[16] Hellenic rationality differs from the modern hyper-analytic mode of division and abstraction, which is manifest in modern sociopolitical life that, having separated "state and church, law and custom," "enjoyment" and "labor, means from ends," fosters fragmentary, partial individuals.[17] Ultimately the Greeks most highlight the malaise of modern man's condition in the realm of play. The Greeks exemplify Schiller's thesis that "Man plays only when he is in the full sense of the word a man, and *he is only wholly Man when he is playing*."[18] This proposition has always "been alive and operative in Art, and in the feeling of the Greeks."[19] For Schiller, the Greeks manifest in their whole culture the essence of fine art.

Read against this backdrop, Hegel's understanding of the Greek "stage of consciousness" as the "stage of beauty" and Hegel's very Kantian presentation of Socrates can be read as a reflection on the contemporary philosophic problems of individual and cultural holism and the role that beauty plays in promoting such holism.[20] Placed in the context of his other writings, Hegel's presentation of Socrates's trial suggests that the principles animating Socrates and Athens are not merely contingently in conflict but are fundamentally irreconcilable. While Socratic interiority flourishes within the modern state, beauty—the animating principle of Greek consciousness—cannot authentically motivate modern man.[21] Hence, attention to this episode in Hegel's history of philosophy deepens our understanding of Hegel's philosophy of history and the nature of modern man's reconciliation with his world. While an individual may be able to be at home in the modern world, such wholeness is mediated and complex. It lacks the immediate simplicity and univocity of Greek wholeness. This mediation means that there is always some difference between the ends of the modern individual and those of his ethical community. This distance is the condition of the full actualization of that domain of the spirit first opened by Socrates, yet this same distance precludes fulfilling Schiller's aspiration of uniting beauty and morality.

## 2. Athenian *Sittlichkeit*

For the Greeks, political life was highly esteemed, and constitutive of their identity and self-understanding. It was a domain distinct from the family, which made its own peculiar demands to which one conformed.[22] Within the political framework, a man was understood as a self-sufficient individual, who strove for excellence (*das Ausgezeichnete*), for preeminence among his fellows. Individuals were motivated by the "drive to display and give evidence of oneself, to let it be seen what one . . . can make of oneself, and in this way to achieve status with others and to take pleasure in this status."[23] Virtue was understood as being the outstanding or exemplary instance of a shared ideal. Greek fine art (*schöne Kunst*) reflects this "joyful self-awareness" of man's capacity to submit to a standard other than himself,

in order to manifest something of universal validity.[24] Thus the original and most immediate form of Greek art is subjective, concerned with displaying man's capacity for perfectibility. Shaping the body into a work of art expresses both individuality and the drive for preeminence. The arena of athletic competition is accordingly prized as a sphere in which an individual may display his own excellence to his fellow citizens.[25] The bodily is the first medium of subjectivity's expression.

Greek religious practice likewise expresses this understanding of what is distinctively human. According to Hegel, for any people, the principal content of spirit, what a people considers highest or most architectonic, is religious.[26] Religion expresses a culture's axiological commitments, what it takes to be essential and ultimately true about the cosmos. For the Greeks, this "essentiality" is "interior and human, formed first of all as a human shape and as its beauty, so that in it human beings comprehend themselves as free" and esteem themselves in "their gesture, shape, expression, deeds and actions: the elaborated human being."[27]

Divinity is both a counterpart to and an expression of what human beings understand as their own essence. On the one hand, humans conceive God as other than themselves, as somehow contrary to the immediate contingency and finitude that marks man's limited situation. But this is a positive relation, as the divine is understood "as their essence and substantiality."[28] Thus the true (*das Wahrhafte*) for a human community is other than human beings, but since it is also what is true for them the divine is "their own inner being."[29] For the Greeks, this essentiality is "the beautiful (*das Schöne*)—spirit in its sensible manifestation.[30] The divine is nothing other than the perfection or idealization of the free beauty—the unity of sensibility with spirituality—that animates art and political life.

This beautiful freedom is exemplified in the Greek gods. Stripped of all human limitation, both the aesthetic beauty of sensible depictions and the grander poetic presentation of the divine reflect the Greek conception of subjectivity.[31] The gods embody the principle of free beauty at its limit; having bodies but being deathless. Thus, the Greeks know themselves to be free; they are defined by this self-conception, but this principle of being free "has not yet itself been explicitly conceptualized; it has not yet been thought, emphasized and acknowledged; rather this knowing-oneself-to-be-free is still united with the natural sphere."[32] The spiritual element is, accordingly, immanent and twofold: "as subjective being-for-self and in unity with the natural."[33] The spiritual exists in substantial unity with the physical. There is no higher, non-sensuous world standing over and above the sensuous, natural, physical world.[34] It is within this religious matrix that the peculiarly Greek art forms of sculpture and drama flourish, and art as such, according to Hegel, reaches its apogee.[35]

The principle of "a spiritualized sensuousness that exists for spirit" is equally present in the Greek political constitution, which "proceeds from the unity of the subjective and objective will."[36] This immediate unity

undergirds their unique political achievement, democracy.[37] But this unity is not predicated on natural biology, as in Oriental politics, which rests on an extension of the patriarchal principle.[38] Rather, the Greeks unite "as rational individuals."[39] This unity as rational does not mean that each individual is exclusively concerned with the true but rather that the orientation of subjectivity to a specific understanding of the beautiful is constitutive for political membership. Political membership is not simply natural and given. The free individual seeks the beautiful center of justice, understood

> as custom, as the objective aspect of willing. . . . The ethical and the just are based on the freedom of the will; they actualize this freedom. Thus the content is defined by the law of freedom, and it is rational. . . . [However] as to the form, it is that of immediacy. The law of the ethical is valid here because in the condition of immediacy it is the law of one's own country.[40]

The peculiarity of the Greek constitution lies in this tension between form and content. The parochialism of the form seems to undermine the rationality of the content. The ground of ethical life is its very immediacy: "what befalls us, just *is*, and thus it must take place."[41] The immediate is compelling precisely because it is given and as such has an undeniable positivity to it; it is real and there is as yet nothing opposed to it, no other standard for judging action or ground for obedience. There is as yet no standpoint beyond the immediately given, no other perspective, from which one might question it. The given is necessary because there is no real alternative.

The rationality that constitutes the content is an expression of the Greek understanding of subjectivity, which remains bound to the sensible. "In beauty as such the idea is still the natural element in sensible representation and is expressed for sensible representation."[42] Just as Greek religion expresses the essence of man in sensibly beautiful representations of divinity, ethical practice is expressed sensibly and has the "character of custom and habit in the mode of nature and of necessity."[43] Since beauty is the principle of ethical life, such a way of life must appear in concrete instantiations and with materiality's feature of natural necessity. Law has the form of immediacy as it is valid prior to the reflection of the citizens, and their willing must lack particularity as that would require self-conscious distinction between themselves and the law.[44] Instead, the will remains objective; expressed in religious imagery: "Athena, the goddess, is still Athens, still the spirit of the people, still the actual spirit of the citizens."[45] It is the aligning of the individual citizen's will with the "common being" of the community as a whole that justifies the democratic regime.[46] The question of the private realm or of the tension between the individual good and the common good is not yet present. In such "immanent ethicality" the individual identifies his own subjectivity with the objectivity of the ethical community, and the individual's will expresses "the simple unity of substantial volition."[47]

Consequently, the "supreme end in Greece was the life of the state, the body of the citizens, and their ethical life and living patriotism. Beyond this interest there was none higher or truer."[48] In such a world, there are no ends beyond the political.

To reiterate, beautiful freedom is "not yet morality, but merely unreflecting ethical existence; for the individual will of the subject intuitively adopts the customs and habits laid down by justice and the laws."[49] Lacking "infinite reflection" and "the infinite subjectivity to which conscience belongs," the practices prescribed by customs, laws, and mores are not subject to justification "before human inwardness."[50] Although the individual's unreflective unity with the city offers a form of wholeness, such wholeness is inherently unstable. The source of this fragility is precisely its immediate unity. Since there is no mediation between but merely coincidental alignment of the ends of subjective and substantial freedom, any reflection or negativity will open a gulf between the two principles. Self-awareness concerning one's actions, habits, and virtues, therefore, would undermine the perfect harmony of the particular and objective will that was achieved in the Greek *polis*. With the introduction of what Hegel calls, in strikingly Kantian language, "autonomous, independent inwardness," Socrates undermines this harmony and precipitates the waning of the Greek world.[51]

## 3. Socrates's Invention of Morality

Hegel claims that, prior to Socrates, the Greeks lacked any "firm abstract principle of truth and virtue."[52] Acting in accordance with the principle of beauty meant that thought had not attained an understanding of its own independence from the concrete particulars of the world. With Socrates, however, "the principle of subjectivity—of the absolute inherent independence of thought—attained free expression."[53] Socrates's examination of the justification of normative principles rests on this freedom, according to which "man has to discover and recognize in himself what is the right and good, and that this right and good is in its nature universal."[54] Normative criteria do not exist independently of man's subjective freedom, for the universal appears only in the movement of thought, which attains to universality through the negation of the particular. This is what makes Socrates not just a teacher of morality but rather "the Inventor of morality [*Erfinder der Moral*]."[55] Socrates did not simply replace one form of behavior with another; Socrates taught the Greeks "what moral virtues, duties, etc. were."[56] With Socrates, a new dimension or depth is added to human consciousness, for the good man or the gentleman (*kalos kagathos*) is no longer "he who merely wills and does that which is right . . . but he who has the consciousness of what he is doing."[57] Thus, intention and awareness become criteria in evaluating ethical behavior. Accordingly, the individual must become the judge of "a final moral decision, in contraposition to country and to customary morality."[58] Elevating consciousness to a

hitherto inconceivable status, Socrates elaborates the principle "that human beings have to discover and learn [*erkennen*] from themselves what their vocation and final goal are." This entails "the return of consciousness into itself, a return that is, however, defined at the same time as the departure from particular subjectivity," since the truth of interiority is simultaneously an objective universal, as thought aspires also to uncover the world's purpose. Thus, truth is now mediated: both posited by thinking and the product of thinking.[59]

In short, thought must first turn inward in order to orient itself with respect to the objective world. The discovery of an individual's purpose is dependent on the purpose or meaning of the world as a whole. Individual subjectivity thus seeks an understanding of itself, which entails an understanding of the cosmos and its place therein. The individual's external and immediately given locality no longer provides satisfactory direction for action or an adequate account for self-understanding. As Velkley observes, morality introduces criteria in light of which

> the actual world of custom appears deficient, and indeed moral judgment 'evaporates' (*verflüchtigt*) all determinate aspects of unreflective custom. Assuming a stance of self-determination, morality cannot abide the merely 'given,' and accepts as certain only what it can determine for itself to be true.[60]

The search for self-knowledge begins by distancing oneself from the given.

Accordingly, for Socrates, religion is no longer the province of the ancestral gods of the hearth and the city, whose status rests on their existing from time immemorial; rather religion is grounded in thought and its content is the divine within the individual subject. By identifying divinity with thought, Socrates changes the temporality of religion. What the individual consciousness does in the present rather than what the gods or the ancestral heroes have done in the past becomes the essence of religion. The standard for conduct is the eternally present: morality is atemporal. But if a city's identity is constituted by an idiosyncratic history, then such anti-traditional reflection removes one from the city, from the common being of the community. If this is so, might the discovery of morality (or Socratic philosophizing) be the source of a peculiarly acute form of alienation?

Though he shares with the Sophists the principle of thought finding verification in itself, the principle of Socrates is distinguished by connecting all thought with something radically other than itself, which subsists independently of thought but is nevertheless part of the movement of thought's return to itself. For Socrates, "thinking's positing and producing is at the same time the producing and positing of what is equally something *not* posited, but what is in and for itself."[61] Thought aspires to an objectivity beyond whim, caprice or contingency, to an independent realm that stands above and rules over the private domain of particular interest. Hegel thus

interprets what is traditionally termed Socrates's dialectic and its relation to the supersensory forms (*eidē*) as two aspects of a single unified movement of consciousness. Subjectively, truth "is posited through the activity of the thinking [subject]. This is the moment of freedom in that the subject is at home with what is its own—this is the spiritual nature. But it is no less subsistent in and for itself; it is objective, meaning by that not outward objectivity but spiritual universality."[62]

The Socratic dialectician's endeavor to uncover the *eidē* is, "in modern terminology, the unity of the subjective and the objective."[63] That is, knowing (an epistemic claim) is understood as being in conformity with what is in-and-for-itself, independently of the knowledge claimant's subjective consciousness (or, what is ontologically objective). This self-evaluating act of thought expresses the self-consciousness inherent in all thinking. However, as opposed to traditional *Sittlichkeit* where mind conforms to an externally given and unquestioned criterion, namely the "unwritten law of the gods, a law that is 'everlasting and no one knows whence it came',"[64] Socrates's subjectivity generates its own criterion—one that is objective, universal, and that exists independently of any particular individual.

Given the metaphysical ramifications of Socrates's innovation, the strictly moral dimension can be seen as more than a matter of seeking guidance for right conduct. Rather, morality implies a claim about man's nature, namely, that he is essentially free and that this freedom consists in the power of thought. Though the Sophists gesture in this direction with the maxim that "man is the measure of all things," they meant "Man simply as subjective . . . that mere liking was the ground of right, and that advantage to the individual was the ground of final appeal," making "mere feeling" the "ultimate ground of decision."[65] In uncovering the *nomos-phusis* distinction, the Sophists had recognized something distinctive about man. However, they failed to realize that freedom consisted not only in the negation of prevailing customs but in a peculiar power of the subject to uncover an independently valid definition of the good and the true. Such a discovery entails the banishing of whim, caprice, and contingency. The Sophists and Socrates may both be antinomian, but the freedom from custom of the former is groundless (and ultimately nihilistic), whereas that of the latter consists in a dialectical ascent to the eternal, something subsisting in-and-for-itself. The discovery of subjective interiority goes together with the discovery of a new objective, ontological realm, that of the universal, eternal, and immutable.

## 4. The Trial of Socrates

Socrates threatens the prevailing beautiful freedom of the Athenians by undermining the criteria by which the city understands itself. The conflict is not contingent, for the Socratic principle can develop only in opposition to the actuality of Athenian *Sittlichkeit*.[66] Negativity is essential to the principle, as opposition is the authentic stance of self-consciousness. Proceeding

critically, Socratic questioning reveals the inadequacy of any particular determination of what is virtuous or good. Dialectical pursuit of the universal or what has being-in-and-for-itself proceeds by exhibiting the limitations and deficiencies of everything particular.[67] Socrates opposes Athenian *Sittlichkeit* because it is only through the negation of the ethical (*das Sittliche*) that consciousness ascends to the universal. The positivity of Athenian *Sittlichkeit*, which citizens ought to regard as fixed and unchangeable, is the condition for Socrates's innovation. The facticity of custom—what gave custom its legitimacy—is also the source of the very finitude that makes it suspect before the tribunal of Socratic reflection. The negativity of thought undermines the naive affirmation of particular ethical practices necessary for Greek political life to flourish. Socratic philosophizing is necessarily politically disruptive.

To understand the full extent of the threat posed by Socrates, Hegel describes two dimensions of Athenian ethical life that bear on the charge of impiety. For the Athenians, the unquestioned ethical life of custom (*nomos*) counted as sacred practice, but a city's customs "not only *are* but they also *come to be*, they originate."[68] Under this aspect, the traditional modes of behavior appear as "divine laws sanctioned by the gods."[69] The practice of divination and the consultation of oracles complemented this divine origin and grounding for customs. Though divinely sanctioned custom provided a general framework, "immediate situations in civic and private life" called for a "deciding factor."[70] Lacking the aspect of subjective freedom, which identifies the subject as the originator of determinative judgments about particulars, "oracles were used for this purpose and subjective decisions rested upon them."[71]

Seen against these two dimensions of *Sittlichkeit*, Socrates's theological innovation consists in: (a) the principle of conscience, which undermines custom's claim to divine origins and the sanctified authority that this assures, and (b) the source of specific determinate judgments that precede any course of action is no longer the oracle but the "inner being" of the individual, which, in Socrates's case, "assumed the characteristic figure of a *daimonion*."[72] In Socrates, human knowing seeks to be at home with itself: the thinking subject is the source of what is universally right and good as well as the decisive factor in deciding on any particular course of action. Thought need not go beyond itself to something other than itself.

However, the role of the subject in determinations of particulars is not yet grasped conceptually, so that "the return of consciousness into itself still has the form of a physical or physiological state," akin to the mantic state of the prophetic divines.[73] Nevertheless, "the crux of the entire world-historical revolution [*Konversion*] constituted by the principle of Socrates is that the testimony of the individual's spirit has replaced oracles, that the subject has taken the decision making upon itself."[74] Socrates "daimonic revelation" works in tandem with the "revelation of his spirit, of his thinking" whereby "what is true and has being in-and-for-itself" is found within

the individual's own consciousness, and the "human being's own self-consciousness, the universal consciousness in anyone's thinking" becomes the focal point of spiritual life.[75] Having usurped the role of the gods and the oracles, the individual is responsible as never before. Accordingly, Hegel concludes: "the accusation that Socrates introduced new gods is entirely correct."[76]

Against the charge that he had persuaded some youths "to obey him rather than their own parents," Socrates argues that if Athens accepts the authority of expertise in other domains, then why not "when it comes to attaining the highest human good, namely, being educated to become a noble human being?"[77] But, as Hegel states, "the point of the accusation is in fact the moral intrusion of a third party into the absolute relationship between parents and children. This is the first, the ethical and immediate relationship."[78] Even if Socrates were correct in his claim to superior knowledge regarding human excellence, the dissolving effect of his presence upon the bonds of filial piety is indefensible; for not only in Greece but even in the modern world, "the worst thing that can happen to children morally and mentally is when this bond uniting the child with its parents is loosened or even severed."[79] In the case of Anytus, for example, it appears that Socrates exacerbated his latent feelings of alienation and incompatibility, and by stressing his ability and talents sowed discord between him and his father. Thus, the second charge that Socrates corrupted the youth is justified. Socrates is responsible for the perpetration of "disobedience to one's parents—the first principle of unethical behavior."[80] If Socrates is the instantiation or idealization of a certain form of reflection, then we see clearly that *Moralität* can have a dissolving, or even corrosive effect on the first ethical bond. Socratic philosophizing appears to run counter to the universal injunction that one ought to honor one's father and mother.

In sum, Socrates violates the fundamental "tacit agreement" to the limits of "freedom of thought and speech," which are necessary for any political organization to endure.[81] As a spiritual realm, the state rests on maxims, fundamental principles, and basic assumptions that give it stability. Consequently, it is justified in limiting any activity that threatens to undermine the communal or corporate life of the citizens. Since the city rests on certain unquestioned opinions, it must defend itself against any attack upon the coherence and integrity of the law. Because "the foundation of the Athenian state was religion, custom as such or unconscious custom, unquestioned belief, familiar routine," the people necessarily opposed Socrates's impious appeal to "the spirit of consciousness."[82] Their identity as Athenians required nothing less.

Socrates's fundamental opposition to Athens is confirmed in his refusal to suggest his own punishment. Proposing one's own penalty was an indication that one recognized the justice of the legal process. Once deemed guilty, however, and with the opportunity to propose a fine or banishment, Socrates "disdained to acknowledge the juridical authority of the people."[83]

Socrates in effect "pits his conscience . . . against the judicial verdict," challenging the fundamental principle of democracy, namely, the "sovereignty of the people."[84] Socrates threatens the homogeneity, the social cohesion, and the naive identification with custom that undergirds the unique form of government of Athens. In the face of Socrates's appeal to his own consciousness, "the Athenian people upheld the right of their law, of their own custom and religion," and accused Socrates of offending not only against specific laws, but against the spirit of Athens.[85] By asserting the superior right of his singular conscience, Socrates attacks the most basic grounds of democracy.

Nevertheless, Hegel praises Socrates as heroically upholding "the absolute right of self-consciousness on its own account, the right of his own self-certain spirit."[86] The trial is the concrete instantiation of the collision of two principles: that of self-conscious self-certainty and of the ethical life of a people. Though the execution "annulled" the individual, the principle gradually raises "itself up to its authentic shape, that of the world spirit, for the authentic mode of this principle is the universal mode" and it is ironically "the spirit of the Athenian people" which "did not recover from this offense nor from its annulment."[87] The trial reveals both the inadequacy of Athenian *Sittlichkeit* to incorporate *Moralität* and the insufficiency of the principle of self-conscious self-certainty when solely the possession of a single individual.[88] But whereas Socratic self-consciousness comes into its own when universalized in the course of world history, the beautiful freedom of Athenian democracy cannot be universalized and so cannot be sublated into a higher moment of Spirit's "self-unfolding consciousness of itself."[89]

## 5. Conclusion: History as Theodicy

The theme of theodicy pervades Hegel's philosophy but is especially important in his account of the logic of history.[90] As he states in the introduction to the 1830–1831 lecture series, speculative, philosophic history allows us to attain a perspective from which we can see history "as a *theodicy*, a justification of the ways of God," enabling "us to comprehend all the ills [*Übel*] of the world, including the existence of evil [*Böse*], so that the thinking spirit may be reconciled with the negative."[91] Such reconciliation, however, depends crucially on "knowledge of the affirmative side of history, in which the negative is reduced to a subordinate position and transcended altogether."[92] Theodicy thus requires a rational reconciliation with the negative—that modern man self-reflexively acknowledge the negativity of history's teleology as the essential condition of his present condition—and an affirmation of the outcome of this historical process.

Since "the whole of history is nothing other than actualization of spirit" and "the state is the worldly actualization of history," the *telos* that might justify the slaughter-bench of world history can only be the modern state.[93] Reconciliation with the modern state requires that "subjective spirit must be

free for itself in this objectivity" and "recognize the content of what exists, this objective content of the World Spirit, as its own."[94] That is, for Hegel, the modern state's achievement constitutes a justification of past deficiencies by finally satisfying the absolute human need to be at home in the world.[95]

The modern state's central claim to validity—namely its reconciliation of *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit*—is the political reconciliation of the principles underlying Socrates's conflict with Athens. As Hegel makes clear in the *Philosophy of Right*, "the right of subjective freedom is the pivotal and focal point in the difference between antiquity and the modern age."[96] The success of the modern state springs from its animating principle, which

> has enormous strength and depth because it allows the principle of subjectivity to attain fulfillment in the *self-sufficient extreme* of personal particularity, while at the same time *bringing it back to substantial unity* and so preserving this unity in the principle of subjectivity itself.[97]

Whereas the Greek *polis* was an immediate unity, the modern distinction between state and civil society enables the socio-political order to tolerate heterogeneity and even conflict of opinion. In the modern state, the individual enjoys mutual recognition as a morally responsible bearer of rights. The modern achievement, the *telos* of history, is the fully self-conscious rational agent, embedded in modern institutions, who freely identifies with the rationality those institutions express.

In the modern world, however, the role of art has substantially and irreversibly changed.[98] The subjectivity formerly expressed in art is now understood and expressed discursively. Though Hegel agrees with Schiller's definition of beauty as the sensuous expression of freedom, in the modern world the individual's subjective freedom or autonomy is divorced from the natural world and must be grasped philosophically and articulated conceptually. Accordingly, beauty and art no longer fulfill the same cultural-political purpose as the primary communal expression of the Absolute. For all Hegel's criticism of Kantian formalism, it is the principle of autonomy that is taken up and universalized in history. Although it must be embedded in an ethical community to overcome its abstract quality, it remains central to Hegel's account of the modern agent and his or her reconciliation with the modern world. Thus, although Schiller correctly diagnoses a central problem in the Kantian system, namely the relation of moral agents to their community, his attempt to overcome the problem by way of connecting the moral law with a sensuous expression fails. Schiller had hoped to respond to contemporary socio-political problems by turning to the aesthetic, declaring that "if man is ever to solve the problem of politics in practice, he will have to approach it through the problem of the aesthetic, because it is only through Beauty that man makes his way to freedom." But according to the logic of world-history, it is simply anachronistic to suggest that the sensuous is man's conduit to freedom.[99]

From Hegel's perspective, Schiller not only misunderstands the Greek world—failing to recognize that in its pristine state it could not encompass Socratic interiority and therefore true morality—he also fails to see that the sensuous expression of freedom cannot be harmonized with modern subjective freedom, namely, the moral agent's capacity for self-legislation. The moral agent, for Hegel as for Kant, must understand himself to act "under the idea of freedom," i.e., that an agent's "actions presuppose the adoption or self-imposition of general principles (norms, maxims)."[100] Such a thought never occurred to the Greeks, who exhibited a naive spontaneity. Understood as natural, the materiality of the sensuous was the appropriate medium for expressing their understanding of freedom. In some respects, what Schiller wanted did indeed exist in the Greek world. Hegel describes, in tones strikingly similar to Schiller's, the "cultus" of Greek religion as having beauty as its "focal point" and consisting in "a serious playing and a playful seriousness, a gravity that is gay."[101] But for Hegel, this exists prior to Socrates's "invention of morality." The trial of Socrates illustrates the limits of an aesthetic ethics and its complementary democratic politics.[102]

If the rejection of Schiller's vision of an aesthetically oriented politics is not just a contingent feature of Hegel's political theory but a necessary outcome of history's unfolding, the idea of Hegel's history as a "cumulative process of progressive development" ought to be understood in less sanguine terms.[103] The dialectical teleology of history that proceeds through repeated *Aufhebung* of conflicting principles is supposed to culminate in a world in which man can be fully at home. But such a view obscures the fact that the sublation of conflicting principles in a higher synthesis is not comprehensive in the sense that nothing admirable or desirable about previous epochs is lost. *Wahrhafte Theodizee*, therefore, must demonstrate why the modern autonomous agent is both a necessary historical outcome and more rationally satisfying than Schiller's ideal of the beautiful soul, harmoniously at play within a political-spiritual community—why the universalization of Socrates's principle is preferable to the beautiful freedom of Greek democracy.

## Notes

1 Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Volume I: Manuscripts of the Introduction and The Lectures of 1822–3* (henceforth PWH) ed. and trans. Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson, assist. by William G. Geuss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 418; *Vorlesungen: Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte* (henceforth *Vorlesungen*) ed. Pierre Garniron and Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1983–), 12: 382; Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts*, vol. II, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 1158–1163; *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (henceforth *Werke*) ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986), Vols. 13–15, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, 15: 474–481. Note Hegel's remark that "the real thing at bottom, the actually all-pervasive cause is therefore indeed the eternal powers, i.e., what is essentially moral, the gods of our actual life, in short what is divine and true" (*Hegel's Aesthetics*, 1162; Hegel, *Werke* 15: 480).

2 PWH 418; *Vorlesungen* 12: 382–383.
3 On the role of "world-historical individuals" in the unfolding of history and the particular as bearing a universal significance see PWH 96, 121–122, 173–176; Hegel, *Werke* 12 (*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*): 45, 12: 90–91; *Vorlesungen* 12: 66–71.
4 Given the centrality of Socrates in opening up interiority or the domain of *Moralität*, might the emergence of Socratic philosophizing rather than Christianity be the source of the central difference between the ancient and the modern worlds in Hegel's philosophy of history?
5 Richard Velkley, "Infinite Personality and Finite Custom: Hegel, Socrates' Daimon, and the Modern State," in *Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Globalization: Citizens Without States*, ed. Lee Trepanier and Kahil M. Habib (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 139–160.
6 For a discussion of German Philhellenism see E. M. Butler, *The Tyranny of Greece Over Germany: A Study of the Influence Exercised by Greek Art and Poetry Over the Great German Writers of the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), especially Ch. 4–6 on Schiller, Goethe and Hölderlin, 83–240; Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down From Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 3–35; David Ferris, *Silent Urns: Romanticism, Hellenism, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 1–51, 158–197.
7 The shared concerns animating the search for holism are treated in Daniel O. Dahlstrom, "The Legacy of Aesthetic Holism: Hamann, Herder, and Schiller," in *Philosophical Legacies: Essays on the Thought of Kant, Hegel and Their Contemporaries* (Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy, Vol 50), gen. ed. Jude P. Dougherty (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 67–92.
8 *Hegel's Aesthetics*, 61; Hegel, *Werke* 13: 89.
9 Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Ethical Rationalism*, in *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations* (Modern European Philosophy), gen. ed. Robert B. Pippin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 418. The characterization of Schiller as a "romantic" is problematic, not least because his turn to Greek models makes him sympathetic to certain dimensions of classicism. Romanticism is of course a term fraught with controversy, as Michael Ferber illustrates in the first chapter of his *Romanticism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1–13. See also Tim Blanning, *The Romantic Revolution* (London: Phoenix, Orion Books, 2010), 1–9.
10 Friedrich Schiller, Letter dated 18th February 1793 in "Kallias or Concerning Beauty: Letters to Gottfried Körner" (1793), in *Classical and Romantic German Aesthetics*, ed. by J. M. Bernstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 152–158. Kant describes the "free play" of our faculties, i.e., the understanding and imagination, that, giving rise to a distinct kind of pleasure, underlies the subjective judgment of beauty in §1–9 of *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. and ed. by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 89–104. Kant explicitly critiques Schiller's position in an extended footnote in *Religion Within the Bounds of Mere Reason*, in *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. by Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni, trans. by George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 72–73.
11 Schiller, "Kallias," 151; see also Friedrich Schiller, Letter 25 in *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. Reginald Snell (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), 119–123 (henceforth *Aesthetic Education*).
12 Kai Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 43.
13 Quoted in Ferber, 20.

14 Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, 49. The conceptual distinction between *Erziehung* and *Bildung* is not systematic in Schiller and the two terms are often used interchangeably. For a discussion of the place of *Bildung* within a constellation of interconnected terms in German philosophy see Raymond Geuss, "Kultur, Bildung, Geist," in *Morality, Culture, and History: Essays on German Philosophy*, ed. Raymond Geuss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 29–50.
15 Schiller, *Aesthetic Education*, 37.
16 *Aesthetic Education*, 38.
17 *Aesthetic Education*, 38–42.
18 *Aesthetic Education*, 80.
19 *Aesthetic Education*, 80.
20 For an account of the Kantian presentation of Socrates, see Velkley, "Infinite Personality and Finite Custom," 144–145. See also Hegel's review entitled "Friedrich Henrich Jacobi's Works, Volume III," in *Heidelberg Writings: Journal Publications*, ed. Brady Bowman and Allen Speight (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 18–20; *Werke* 4 (*Nürnberger und Heidelberger Schriften 1808–1817*), 445–448.
21 As a form of Absolute Spirit, artistic representation—the domain of the beautiful—has been superseded in the modern world by religion and philosophy as the appropriate mediums for expressing man's freedom. See *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, trans. W. Wallace and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), §572–573, p. 267; Hegel, *Werke* 10 (*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* III), 378–379.
22 PWH 385; *Vorlesungen* 12: 334. Hegel equivocates in discussing Greece and Athens. Sometimes the two are clearly distinct, e.g., in his analysis of the Peloponnesian War. At other times Athens is presented as reflecting Greek culture as a whole, e.g., in Hegel's discussion of Greek art and democracy.
23 PWH 385; *Vorlesungen* 12: 335.
24 PWH 386; *Vorlesungen* 12: 336.
25 PWH 386; *Vorlesungen* 12: 336.
26 PWH 387; *Vorlesungen* 12: 337–338.
27 PWH 387–388; *Vorlesungen* 12: 338.
28 PWH 388; *Vorlesungen* 12: 338.
29 PWH 388; *Vorlesungen* 12: 338.
30 PWH 388; *Vorlesungen* 12: 338.
31 See "The Religion of Beauty" in Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Volume II: Determinate Religion*, ed. by Peter C. Hodgson (Berkley: University of California Press, 1996), 160–189; *Vorlesungen* 4: 66–95. Though focused on religious practices, the underlying idea is precisely the same: "the substantial ethical life does not simultaneously contain the infinite antithesis, the absolute formal reflection of self-consciousness into itself; it does not involve morality, one's own conviction and insight" (Ibid., 165; *Vorlesungen* 4:71).
32 PWH 388; *Vorlesungen* 12: 338–339.
33 PWH 389; *Vorlesungen* 12: 340.
34 PWH 389; *Vorlesungen* 12: 341.
35 Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, 1:155–158, 427; 2: 718–720, 730–731, 1158, 1206–1220; Hegel, *Werke* 13: 205–209; 14: 13, 14: 372–374, 14: 386–388; 15: 475–476, 15: 535–552. Hegel's argument for Greek aesthetic supremacy is predicated on the idea that "art at its best presents us . . . with the *ideal* of freedom." Hegel calls sensuous expression of the ideal of freedom "true beauty," which takes two forms: the *pure* beauty of Greek sculpture and the *concrete* beauty of Greek drama. Stephen Houlgate, "Hegel's Aesthetics," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford, CA: The Metaphysics Research Lab, 2010), 10–13; 23–26. See also §561 of Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind*, 260–261; *Werke* 10: 369–370.

36 PWH 372, 400; *Vorlesungen* 12: 315, 357. On the relation between a culture's religion and its political life note Hegel's remark that "the way in which the subject determines its goals in worldly life depends on the consciousness of its own essential truth. . . . The morality and political constitution of the people must have the same character as its religion; for morality and the political constitution [*Moralität und Staatsverfassung*] are governed wholly by whether a people grasps only a limited representation of the freedom of spirit, or has the true consciousness of freedom." Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Volume I: Introduction and the Concept of Religion*, ed. and trans. P. C. Hodgson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 181, n. 77; *Vorlesungen* 3: 89, n. 672.
37 PWH 399; *Vorlesungen* 12: 355. Hegel contrasts Greek democracy with the political forms of the other three ages of human history, i.e., Oriental despotism, Roman aristocracy and German monarchy. See Peter C. Hodgson, *Shapes of Freedom: Hegel's Philosophy of World History in Theological Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 72–73. Hegel's four stages of history appropriate the *Lebensalter* model found in previous philosophies of history such as Johann Gottfried Herder's *Another Philosophy of History for the Education of Mankind* (1774), trans. Ioannis D. Evrigenis and Daniel Perllerin (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004). For Hegel, the Greek world is mankind's adolescence (*Jugendalter*). See Hodgson, *Shapes of Freedom: Hegel's Philosophy of World History in Theological Perspective*, 89–90.
38 PWH 400; *Vorlesungen* 12: 357.
39 PWH 399; *Vorlesungen* 12: 355.
40 PWH 400–401; *Vorlesungen* 12: 357–358.
41 PWH 401; *Vorlesungen* 12: 358.
42 PWH 401; *Vorlesungen* 12: 358.
43 PWH 401; *Vorlesungen* 12: 358.
44 PWH 401; *Vorlesungen* 12: 358–359.
45 PWH 401; *Vorlesungen* 12: 358.
46 PWH 401; *Vorlesungen* 12: 358.
47 PWH 402; *Vorlesungen* 12: 359.
48 Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, Vol. 1, 510; *Werke* 14: 117.
49 Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, *Introduction: Reason in History* (henceforth *Reason in History*) trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 202; Hegel, *Werke* 12 (*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*): 137–138.
50 PWH 399; *Vorlesungen* 12: 356.
51 PWH 399; *Vorlesungen* 12: 356.
52 Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. by J. Sebree (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1956), 269; Hegel, *Werke* 12: 328. The translation by J. Sibree follows the edition of Hegel's lectures on the *Philosophy of History* compiled by his son, Karl Hegel, found in Vol. 12 of Hegel, *Werke*. For a discussion of the differences between various editions see the "Editorial Introduction" to the Brown and Hodgson translation of PWH 1–10.
53 Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 269; Hegel, *Werke* 12: 328.
54 Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 269; Hegel, *Werke* 12: 329.
55 Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 269; Hegel, *Werke* 12: 329.
56 Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 269; Hegel, *Werke* 12: 329.
57 Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 269; Hegel, *Werke* 12: 329.
58 Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 270; Hegel, *Werke* 12: 329.
59 Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825–6* (henceforth LHP), *Volume II: Greek Philosophy*, ed. by Robert F. Brown, trans. by Robert F. Brown, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 124–125; *Vorlesungen* 7: 127.
60 Velkley, "Infinite Personality and Finite Custom", 143.

61 LHP 125–126; *Vorlesungen* 7: 129.
62 LHP 126; *Vorlesungen* 7: 129.
63 LHP 126; *Vorlesungen* 7: 129.
64 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 431–432; Hegel, *Werke* 3 (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*), 322.
65 Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 269; Hegel, *Werke* 12: 328.
66 LHP 155; *Vorlesungen* 7: 162–163.
67 LHP 140; *Vorlesungen* 7: 146.
68 LHP 146; *Vorlesungen* 7: 152.
69 LHP 146; *Vorlesungen* 7: 152.
70 LHP 146; *Vorlesungen* 7: 152.
71 LHP 146–147; *Vorlesungen* 7: 152.
72 LHP 145–146; *Vorlesungen* 7: 151–152.
73 LHP 148; *Vorlesungen* 7: 154.
74 LHP 148; *Vorlesungen* 7: 154.
75 LHP 150; *Vorlesungen* 7: 157.
76 LHP 150; *Vorlesungen* 7: 157.
77 LHP 150, 152; *Vorlesungen* 7: 157, 158.
78 LHP 152; *Vorlesungen* 7: 158.
79 LHP 152; *Vorlesungen* 7: 159.
80 LHP 152; *Vorlesungen* 7: 159.
81 LHP 152; *Vorlesungen* 7: 160.
82 LHP 152–153; *Vorlesungen* 7: 160.
83 LHP 154; *Vorlesungen* 7: 161.
84 LHP 154; *Vorlesungen* 7: 161.
85 LHP 154; *Vorlesungen* 7: 162.
86 LHP 154; *Vorlesungen* 7: 162.
87 LHP 155; *Vorlesungen* 7: 162.
88 LHP 155; *Vorlesungen* 7: 162–163.
89 LHP 155; *Vorlesungen* 7: 163.
90 For an overview of the theme of theodicy in Hegel's work in the context of modern European philosophy, see Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 84–103.
91 Hegel, *Reason in History*, 42–43; *Werke* 12: 28.
92 Hegel, *Reason in History*, 43; *Werke* 12: 28.
93 PWH 521; *Vorlesungen* 12: 521.
94 PWH 521; *Vorlesungen* 12: 521.
95 As Raymond Geuss underscores, for the theodicy to be successful, the world must be "basically rational, comprehensible in principle, and 'commensurate' to us in the sense that it is amenable to allowing us to realize our deepest human interests and aspirations." Geuss, "Art and Theodicy," in *Morality, Culture, and History: Essays on German Philosophy*,, 81.
96 Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. by Allen W. Wood, trans. by H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 151; Hegel, *Werke* 7 (*Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*), 233.
97 Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 282; Hegel, *Werke* 7: 407.
98 N. B. "Art considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past. Thereby it as lost for us genuine truth and life, and has rather been transferred into our *ideas* instead of maintaining its earlier necessity in reality and occupying its higher place." Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts*, Vol. 1, 11; Hegel, *Werke* 13: 25.
99 Schiller, *Aesthetic Education*, 27.
100 Pippin, *Hegel's Ethical Rationalism*, 431.

101 Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Volume II: Determinate Religion*, 168; *Vorlesungen* 4: 74.

102 Note Hegel's remark that "It appears to be a remarkable destiny of the human race that, as soon as it arrives at subjective inwardness, . . . its higher standpoint of subjective freedom inhibits the possibility of achieving what one often calls, preeminently, the freedom *of a people*, namely democracy" PWH 402; *Vorlesungen* 12: 360.

103 Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History* (Phoenix Books) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 31.

# 4 How Hegel Read the Platonic Dialogues

*Jere O'Neill Surber*

## 1. Introduction

A strong case can be made for the claim that Hegel was the first modern thinker to read the Platonic dialogues seriously and philosophically. Several considerations, partly historical and partly philosophical, are relevant to this. It was not until just before the dawn of the "modern period" that the first, now canonical, edition of the Platonic dialogues appeared: the parallel Latin and Greek version of Stephanus in 1578, still the standard form of citation to the Platonic dialogues. The first German translation of most of what has become regarded as the "Platonic canon" was produced by Friedrich Schleiermacher, beginning in 1804 and continuing, with some revisions, until 1828. Schleiermacher's German translation of the Platonic dialogues not only made this crucial body of work available to contemporaneous philosophers like Hegel, but has remained in print as the standard version of Plato's works in German to the present day. While Hegel and his contemporaries Schelling and Hölderlin were not strictly trained as classical philologists at the Tübinger Stift, they had some working knowledge of ancient Greek, though likely not enough to allow them to read Plato, Aristotle, or other classical texts without some assistance from German translations.[1]

As it turned out, Hegel devoted almost a third of his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*[2] to pre-Platonic thought (if one includes in this his discussions of Socrates and the "Socratic schools") and about the second third to Plato, Aristotle, and Hellenistic philosophy. Of this second section, about a quarter was devoted explicitly to Plato's thought, a degree of attention rivaled, in the entire *Lectures*, only by that devoted to Aristotle.[3] Of course, Hegel's interest in Plato was motivated by neither exclusively philological nor historicist concerns. Rather, it arose from the novel and distinctive convergence within his own thought between the "philosophical history" that he proposed in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* and his own systematic project.[4] With respect to this convergence, Plato's thought—even more so than that of Kant—represented for Hegel the pivotal point at which his novel account of the history of philosophy coincided with the most basic convictions and themes of his systematic philosophy. Viewed historically,

Hegel regarded Plato's attempt to formulate a conceptual "synthesis" of Parmenidean "Being" and Heraclitean "Becoming" as defining the agenda for the entire subsequent historical development of philosophy. Viewed systematically, he regarded his own philosophical project as articulating certain of Plato's most fundamental insights in a properly "rational form" not yet available to Plato himself.

This *prima facie* centrality of Plato's thought to Hegel's own historical and systematic concerns, together with the fact that Hegel was, perhaps, better equipped than any previous modern philosopher to engage directly with the Platonic dialogues, raises a more fundamental, and also in some respects practical, question: how, in fact, did Hegel read the Platonic dialogues? We know now, after over several hundred years of philological research and often highly contested philosophical debate, that the Platonic dialogues, both individually and as a body of work, present massive interpretive difficulties. In the end, these require the reader to make an array of assumptions and choices from which any particular overall interpretation of Plato's thought can emerge. In what follows, I will be more concerned with the specifics of the way in which Hegel read the dialogues that resulted in his overall view of Plato, and less concerned with the general philosophical contours of that overall view itself (which has often been discussed, and which Hegel himself usually makes fairly clear). Fortunately, Hegel himself is quite explicit, especially in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, about many of these matters and it is worth attending carefully both to what he tells us about his own way of reading Plato, as well as how he actually proceeds. My suggestion is that such an attempt will not only shed considerable light on the fundamental sources of Hegel's own philosophical project, but will help in setting a sort of "baseline" for later interpretations of Plato, established by the work of the first modern philosophical reader of the dialogues.

## 2. Hegel's Primary Assumption: The Concept (*der Begriff*) as "Concrete Universal"

Hegel's manner of reading the Platonic dialogues—which sets it apart from many other readings, both before and after him—is based upon a single philosophical assumption, and several "corollaries" associated with it. It is that genuine "ideas" or "concepts" (*Begriffe*) are always and necessarily concrete universals. Hegel explains this in several ways. One is that every "idea" or "concept" is a *unity* of both form and content. That is, every reference to an idea or concept in terms of form immediately elicits the question, "Form of what?" Similarly, every reference to content evokes the parallel question, "Content of (or contained in) what?" For Hegel, we cannot consistently conceive of "pure forms" independent of any content whatever, nor of "mere content" dissociated from some formal principle that allows us to refer to "*this* content" rather than any other random assemblage of

elements. This is, of course, part of Hegel's more specific critique of "formalism" in philosophy, most familiar, perhaps, from the Preface to the Jena *Phenomenology of Spirit*.[5]

In explaining the meaning of concepts as "concrete universals," Hegel also often has recourse to a more "logical" way of formulating this. On his fundamental view, every concept presents (or, perhaps better, can be explicated in terms of) an "identity-in-difference."[6] Put in simpler terms than Hegel typically employs, the "formal element" of a concept serves the function of unifying (or synthesizing) its multiple contents, while the "contentual element" involves a set of "differences" that is unified. Of course, one can in any case attempt to abstract the "universal form" from its "content," and Hegel holds that this has all too often occurred in the history of philosophy. But the result, for Hegel, will no longer count as a genuine idea or concept, only an empty and meaningless cipher (in the case of form) or an unintelligible and inexpressible assemblage (in the case of content).[7]

This has direct bearing on Hegel's reading of the Platonic dialogues, since it entails the rejection of any interpretation of Plato that would assume some ontologically fundamental difference between "ideas" and "things," or "universals" and "particulars." This, in turn, implies the rejection of any "two-world theory" as a basis for understanding Plato's overall philosophical stance.

## 3. Hegel on How *Not* to Read the Platonic Dialogues

Hegel is well aware that under such an assumption his approach to Plato's dialogues directly challenges most of the readings of Plato familiar from the tradition, and he confronts this directly in the *Lectures*.[8] There he challenges two readings of the Platonic dialogues he regards as complete misinterpretations, though they share in common the fact that they both have the effect of "hypostatizing" thought (i.e., universals) and sensory experience (i.e., particulars).

The first erroneous reading reduces the Platonic ideas to "properties of existing sensuous things," then abstracts them from the things and, in effect, makes them into another sort of "thing," albeit a "supersensuous thing"—though one still, in some sense, existing alongside sensuous things. Such interpretations, on Hegel's reading, sever what he regards as the crucial connection between the Platonic ideas and thought itself as a dynamic process, turning the Platonic ideas into "something out there," and rendering them external to "their own true medium" which is thought.[9]

The other mistaken interpretation views the ideas as "mere concepts" in the psychological sense of "creations of our minds," a view that he attributes to both the empiricists and to Kant. This view severs the crucial connection between ideas and sensuous things, turning the Platonic ideas into what we might call today "mental concepts" lacking any "objective existence" of their own or any real influence on existing things.

Hegel therefore rejects both what we might call the "objectivist" and "subjectivist" interpretations of the Platonic ideas or forms. Of course, Hegel realizes that, given some of the arguments that Plato offers for the ideas or forms at various points, either reading could be justified *if* a given Platonic argument or dialogue is taken in isolation. But Hegel, as the first modern "unitarian" and "synoptic" reader of Plato, maintains that, if all textual evidence is considered together, neither reading can finally be justified. As opposed to such readings, Hegel insists that Plato's true philosophical significance is to have been the first figure in the history of philosophy to properly understand the Concept as concrete universal. Where certain passages or even dialogues seem to confirm either of the mistaken views, Hegel suggests that Plato, who lacked any systematic way of presenting something that is essentially an "identity-in-difference," could present the concrete universal only through a series of different perspectives on it. Some of these would inevitably highlight the "differences" contained in this principle at the expense of the "unity" implied in it. However, on Hegel's overall reading of the dialogues, it is always necessary to remain aware of other passages and dialogues with opposing emphases.

## 4. The Platonic Dialogue as a Genre of Philosophical Discourse

The preceding point is closely related to Hegel's account of the dialogue form in which Plato presented his views.[10] On the one hand, to Hegel's credit, he seems to be one of the first readers of Plato to acknowledge that the dialogue is a distinctive form of philosophical writing that itself has philosophical significance and implications. It is worth noting that Hegel, unlike many earlier (and some later) readers of Plato, entirely discounts any consideration of some "esoteric" Platonic doctrine not contained in the dialogues themselves. To such readers, he flatly responds, "In the Dialogues of Plato, his philosophy is quite clearly expressed."[11] On the other hand, Hegel's actual readings of the dialogues do not involve any significant amount of analysis of such things as their settings, historical context, *dramatis personae*, dramatic form, or other textual elements that have been the concern of some subsequent readers. Rather, he tends to regard such matters as unavoidable though contingent features of the form itself that often obscure as much as they disclose. In the end, Hegel holds that the major philosophical significance of the dialogue form is that, in Plato's hands, it served as an ingenious vehicle for articulating genuinely philosophical thought at a time when the notion of systematic organization and a method appropriate to it were still lacking. Still, Hegel credits Plato's philosophical brilliance with having been able to "clearly express" the most profound philosophical thought—the Concept as the concrete universal—through a form that otherwise remained so inadequate to it.[12]

## 5. Hegel's "Favorite Dialogues"

The dialogues that philosophical readers of Plato regard as most important and choose to study in detail reveal a good deal not only about their particular view of Plato, but also about their own broader philosophical commitments. Hegel is no exception to this. While Schleiermacher's translation of the dialogues (based on the Stephanus edition), included most of the Platonic canon recognized today, Hegel clearly regards three as most important[13]—*Parmenides*, *Timaeus*, and *Republic*—and the bulk of his discussion in the *Lectures* is devoted to them.[14] Why, then, did Hegel view these dialogues as privileged among the others in (to borrow Hegel's own words, quoted earlier) "clearly expressing" Plato's philosophy"?

The first thing to notice is that none of them seems to endorse a "two-worlds" view of the sort that we find, perhaps most explicitly, in the *Phaedo*. Rather, *Parmenides* is arguably the dialogue that is the most overtly critical of such a view; *Timaeus* adopts a genealogical and cosmological approach (arguably) largely irrelevant to such an assumption; and *Republic* seems, at times, to endorse such a view and, at others, to "deconstruct" it. As Hegel seems to be suggesting, it is exactly in such dialogues in which the "two-worlds" view is either contested or absent that Plato best succeeds in articulating the Concept as concrete universal.

Also striking is Hegel's general lack of interest in the "epistemological" dialogues that have been the focus of much subsequent attention: dialogues such as the *Theaetetus*, *Meno*, and *Protagoras*. From what has been said so far, it is fairly easy to see why. Since Hegel rejects any "theory of ideas" or "two-worlds" view with respect to Plato, any epistemological discussion presupposing this framework is, at best, of limited interest to Hegel. In terms of Hegel's own thought, the point of the first major section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* might be described as a demonstration that the "standpoint of epistemology" cannot even be formulated in a logically coherent manner and, once this is understood, philosophy need no longer trouble itself with such questions. For Hegel, what is most salient about the three main dialogues he discusses is that they are "metaphysical" (or maybe "ontological"), not merely "epistemological." They deal with foundational philosophical issues in ways that limited epistemological considerations do not.

Finally, Hegel's extended readings of these three dialogues make it clear that they, more than any others, anticipate, if "through a glass and darkly," the structure of his own mature system. In the *Lectures* and elsewhere, Hegel refers to *Parmenides* as a source and best forerunner in the entire history of philosophy for his *Science of Logic*.[15] On Hegel's reading, *Timaeus* represents the most profound "philosophy of nature" before the advent of modern science and his own time.[16] Finally, *Republic*, on Hegel's reading, not only contains an entire "philosophy of spirit" *in nuce*, but presents, in its middle chapters, the "idea of the Good," the historical avatar of

Hegel's own "Absolute Spirit."[17] It is important to notice that these three "notions"—the Logical Concept, Nature, and Absolute Spirit—function, in Hegel's thought, as the three most developed concrete universals and, therefore, suggest why Hegel favors the three dialogues that (respectively) most clearly express them.

## 6. Hegel's Summary of Plato's Views in the Dialogues

At the conclusion of his reading of Plato's dialogues (especially the three highlighted in section 5), Hegel offers a brief summary of his engagement with them, in the form of what we might today call "talking points."[18] They are sufficiently interesting, sometimes surprising, and critically provocative that they merit further commentary. I will suggest, as I proceed, that Hegel's own summary of the results of his reading of Plato provides ample room for a critique of his interpretation. He begins his summary by saying: "This may be regarded as the kernel of Plato's philosophy." There follow five significant observations, which I will treat individually:

(a) "The contingent form of speech, in which men of noble and unfettered nature converse without other interest than that of the theory which is being worked out."

Here, Hegel acknowledges two things. The first is the limited and "contingent" dialogue form in which Plato presents his philosophy. The second invokes the historical and cultural setting that first permits philosophy to arise as a distinctive form of discourse. As Hegel has argued from as early as his *Differenzschrift* (1800/1), philosophy is always a "child of its time" (or, more vividly, "the Owl of Minerva"). Specific historical conditions must obtain before a distinctive philosophy can arise and the "form" that philosophy assumes derives from these conditions. In the case of Plato, the dialogue form mirrors the prevailing cultural context of Plato's Athens, which provided the conditions (and leisure, as Aristotle will later add) for free exchange about matters beyond the merely practical.

It is worth noting, however, that "contingent" is a loaded term for Hegel if philosophy is in question. In a way, it is exactly the "contingent form of speech" characteristic of the Platonic dialogues that, for Hegel, must give way to the "necessity" of systematic discourse. In a way, Plato's great stylistic innovation, the philosophical dialogue, is also, for Hegel, the very thing that restricted the scope of his philosophical thought and expression.

(b) "Led on by the content, they reach the deepest concepts [*Begriffe*] and the finest thoughts, like jewels on which one stumbles, if not exactly in a sandy desert, yet at least upon the arid path."

Hegel's suggestion here is that, even though the articulation of Plato's thought is limited by the forms of expression available to him, he nonetheless

succeeds in establishing what will henceforth be the "true content" of all subsequent philosophy. Here, Hegel, in effect, credits the Greek philosophical "genius" in discerning the "true content" of philosophy at all (that is, the concrete universal). By so doing, he acknowledges the crucial importance of Greek philosophy generally, and Platonic philosophy in particular, for the subsequent history of philosophy.

Still, Hegel's qualified metaphors here are a bit puzzling. There is an important difference, with respect to the origins of philosophy, between regarding its instauration as "stumbled upon" (randomly, as it were) in a "sandy desert" and finding it on a "path" already being traversed, however "arid" it might be. With regard to Hegel's claim that Plato was the true beginning of "philosophy as we know it," we might well ask of him: Did philosophy originate from Plato's unaccountable genius (the jewel in the desert) or was he already on a path that made his "discovery" possible? In the end, I think Hegel remains ambivalent about this, although, when pressed, I suspect he would lean toward the latter. However, it is at least conceivable, even to Hegel, that Socrates would have found no chronicler and that the jewels may have remained in the desert, only later, if ever, to be found. I make this observation only to point to a fundamental ambivalence in Hegel's treatment of the "origins of philosophy," though one which he was clearly aware, as his metaphors seem to suggest.

(c) "No systematic connection is to be found, though one interest is the source of all."

This is another way of saying that, while Plato "discovered" the "true content" of philosophy (the concrete universal as "idea," "the Good," etc.), he lacked an adequate form in which to articulate it. That is, since Plato lacked a general conception of some overall "scientific" (*wissenschaftlich*) or "systematic" method or way of proceeding philosophically, his most important "discoveries" have a sort of random or accidental character. This reveals Hegel's insistence that genuine philosophical thought must ultimately be "systematic," that is, an articulated whole in which all parts are linked by some single method or procedure and thus mutually reflect and support one another.[19] Hegel's own underlying idea is that if "Being" is a unified and "organic" totality, then so must be our philosophical articulations of it. According to Hegel, the development of such a "method" will commence with Aristotelian logic and its related "sciences" and eventually develop into Hegel's own dialectical Logic and system.

However, it remains unclear what Hegel means by saying with respect to Plato that "one interest is the source of all." The obvious thing would be to think that the "one interest" is the articulation of the concrete universal. But that is Hegel's own "one interest," not explicitly that of Plato, who, on Hegel's own reading, simply "discovered" but did not take it as his own explicit project. On the other hand, Hegel might have in mind Plato's Good (*to agathon*), but that would assume a fairly rigorous reading of all the

Platonic dialogues from the perspective of the middle books of the *Republic*, something that even Hegel doesn't pursue. If it is neither of those, then the question remains open as to what Hegel might mean by this or how it might apply to Plato. In any event, this represents something of a "disconnect" in Hegel's reading of Plato.

(d) "The subjectivity of the Concept is lacking throughout."

On Hegel's interpretation of the history of philosophy, while the Greeks (and Plato in particular) discovered the "true content" of philosophy (the Concept), it remained for them "merely objective" and had not yet become appropriated as the subject's own possession.[20] Elsewhere, Hegel develops two important points relevant to this. First, the tendency in Plato (and the Greeks generally) is to view subjectivity in terms of the soul, but, in doing so, the soul becomes treated as a sort of "object," a passive "receptacle" or "storehouse" of sensory input, emotional forces, virtues and vices, ideas, thoughts, and so forth. Second, this was because Plato and the Greeks in general lacked the closely related modern notions of self-consciousness and freedom that lie at the basis of the modern conception of "subjectivity" or the "self." Hegel especially credits the Protestant Reformation, Descartes, and Kant as supplying the basic intellectual materials for the construction of these concepts, which are for him wholly modern.

On this score, one might well grant Hegel's point that the Greek ideas of subjectivity, the self, and freedom were markedly different from their modern counterparts. However, it is tempting to suggest that Hegel may have overstated his case. In the case of Plato, one wonders whether, if Hegel had paid more attention to the dramatic elements and textual details presented in the dialogue form, he would not have discovered some more robust and nuanced intimations of the modern notions of "subjectivity," and perhaps even of freedom, than this statement suggests.[21] In fact, Hegel himself tends to regard Plato's notion of soul as itself a primary case of a concrete universal. Perhaps, had he pursued this further, he might have found reason to qualify the extreme view expressed here.

(e) "The substantial Idea forms the principle."

As implied earlier, one way that Hegel viewed his own philosophical task was as a synthesis of the Greek clarity about the objective "true content" of philosophy (the concrete universal) with the rich idea of subjectivity or self that begins with the Protestant Reformation and develops over the course of modern philosophy. This is the idea that subjectivity, as capable of freely determining itself by its own objective, lawlike principles (an idea most fully developed in Kant, especially in his moral philosophy), is the ultimate concrete universal and the destination of philosophy's historical development. Put simply, according to Hegel, for Plato and the Greeks, "ideas" ultimately

remain external to the soul and function as "objective principles" by which it is bound and determined. It is only with modernity that the objectivity of ideas becomes "internalized" and the idea of subjectivity that is itself the free source of objective laws and principles develops. This, of course, is a complicated way of expressing the modern concept of freedom.

On the one hand, Hegel must be credited as the first modern philosopher explicitly to recognize and focus attention upon certain fundamental differences between the Greek and modern worldviews, together with their crucial implications for philosophy. But, on the other hand, Hegel's own "principle of selection," which dictated his choices regarding which of the Platonic dialogues best expressed Plato's most philosophically important insights, also served to blind him to other themes contained in dialogues mostly excluded from his scope of consideration. Here I especially have in mind certain dialogues, many of which do involve the sort of epistemological discussions that Hegel tended to avoid, in which Socrates's encounters with sophists are presented, for example, *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, and *Sophist*. It is interesting that Hegel relegates his discussion of the sophists, together with his discussion of Socrates and the "Socratic schools," to the section of the *Lectures* preceding his discussion of Plato. This has the consequences—which are almost certainly textually, historically, and philosophically false—of suggesting that the question of Plato's relation to Socrates was relatively unproblematic and that the sophists somehow represented an earlier phase of Greek philosophical thought that was no longer of concern to Plato.

However, the challenge posed by the sophists to Plato's own thought was neither merely a matter of Socratic score-settling characteristic of the previous generation, nor something largely irrelevant to Plato's own philosophical concerns. Rather, an approach to Plato more nuanced than Hegel's might suggest that, rather than being mere discursive foils for Socrates, the sophists represented certain views that Plato took seriously and attempted to accommodate in his own thinking. Among these views were skepticism, which plays a crucial role in the overall texture of philosophical thought; a more "subjectivist" orientation implied by such sophistic dicta as "man is the measure of all things"; and perhaps even an early suggestion of the role that something like "free will" (or at least arbitrary decision) plays in human affairs. In any event, one wonders whether Hegel would have reached the same conclusions about Plato if he had taken some of the insights of the sophists as seriously as Plato clearly did, and if he had considered in more detail some of the dialogues in which they are expressed.

## 7. Conclusion: Hegel and Subsequent Approaches

This essay has attempted to make the case that Hegel can rightly be regarded as the first modern philosophical interpreter of the Platonic dialogues. Judged against what had gone before, there seems little question that Hegel's reading of the dialogues freed Plato's works from a good deal of the

theological baggage and rigid molds into which his thought had long been cast. It also firmly established the Platonic dialogues as potential sources for serious modern philosophical reflection, not just remnants of a bygone age of merely philological interest. And it put later thinkers on notice that past caricatures of Plato and "Platonism" could not be maintained in the face of the actual study and readings of the dialogues themselves.

In terms of the shortcomings of Hegel's reading of the Platonic dialogues, I have tried to avoid criticizing Hegel on the grounds that he found in the dialogues only reflections of his own philosophical assumptions and views. With such an extensive and complex body of work as that of Plato, I believe that this is virtually inevitable. Instead, I have attempted to focus more on the details of how Hegel actually read the dialogues. Such criticisms as I have offered concern less Hegel's own philosophical views than the "mechanics" of his reading and interpretation of Plato—his "hermeneutics of Plato," so to speak. Beyond this, I have preferred to leave the cards where they fall with respect to the broader implications this might have for assessing Hegel's own philosophical accomplishment.

Even so, it is fair to reflect briefly on how Hegel's reading of the dialogues compares with some of the later approaches to them that he, in some important ways, instigated. If we set aside readings of the dialogues that are primarily motivated by philological and historicist concerns,[22] then there are at least four philosophical approaches to the dialogues worth considering in relation to Hegel's approach.

(a) The "Exoteric/Esoteric" Approach. Already familiar from the time of Aristotle (who occasionally mentions an "oral teaching" circulating within the Academy), this approach was reintroduced some years ago by Leo Strauss, Jacob Klein, and, more recently, such members of the "Tübingen School" as Hans Krämer and Konrad Gaiser. While such approaches tend to emphasize "close readings" of the dialogues and give considerable weight to the Platonic *Epistles* (which Hegel did not), one must grant Hegel's point that, since some "oral teaching" is no longer available to us, we can only reliably access Plato's philosophical thought, and its influence on subsequent philosophy, on the basis of the dialogues themselves. Any "esoteric teaching" beyond this will always remain a matter of conjecture.

(b) The Neo-Kantian Approach. This interpretive strategy, most associated with certain figures of the "Marburg School" such as Paul Natorp, Ernst Cassirer, and Gottfried Martin, focused upon *Platons Ideenlehre* (the title of Natorp's seminal work). Such an approach tended to highlight those dialogues in which Plato most explicitly presented the forms or ideas and, through the lens of Kantian philosophy, attempted to extract from the dialogues a "theory of categories" that would, in part, correspond with and supplement Kant's views. It is likely that Hegel would have regarded such an approach as a latter-day representative of

the "subjectivist" misreading of Plato that he had already identified in the *Lectures*.

(c) "Analytic" Approaches. Though not necessarily the first to do so, Gregory Vlastos, beginning in the 1950s, introduced a way of reading the Platonic dialogues that has become virtually the "default view" for most subsequent philosophers in the "analytic tradition." Seeking to re-establish Plato's views as vitally relevant to the contemporary concerns of analytic philosophy, it tends to highlight logical, epistemological, and, to a lesser extent, ethical discussions occurring in the dialogues. In doing so, such an approach tends largely to discount all contextual, stylistic, and dramatic features of the dialogues in favor of extracting and logically reformulating discrete arguments presented in them. It also tends to be less interested in pursuing the broader views that Plato might have held, or in assessing their historical impact. Rather, this approach focuses on how certain arguments appearing in the dialogues may be relevant to contemporary philosophical debates. Even if we grant, as Hegel himself did, that Plato cannot be regarded as a "systematic thinker," it nonetheless seems mistaken to reduce Plato's thought to some set of discrete and (relatively) disconnected arguments, overlooking the broader contours and philosophical significance of Plato's thought, which were so important for Hegel.

(d) "Continental" Approaches. With some exceptions (such as the Neo-Kantian readings of Plato mentioned in [b]), most modern Continental readers of Plato have been deeply influenced by the textual strategies deployed by Nietzsche. In a line running from Nietzsche to quite recent times, Plato has been read as variously maintaining either an outright "two-world" view (Nietzsche), inaugurating a philosophically and historically fateful "ontological difference" (Heidegger), or creating some other such fissure as that between speech and writing (Derrida). In every case, as opposed to any unitary (and intellectually generous) reading of Plato, such as that presented by Hegel, this strategy attempts to locate in the Platonic dialogues some decisive "difference," fissure, or disconnect from which the misadventures of the entire European moral and intellectual tradition is alleged to have followed. At the very least, as readings of the Platonic dialogues, these seem no less overstatements than some of the views mentioned in the case of Hegel.

Even if we may have reason to regard certain aspects of Hegel's interpretation of the dialogues as in need of qualification or critique, including his admitted tendency to read back into the dialogues his own philosophical convictions, I suggest that the limitations of Hegel's hermeneutics are no more severe or distorting than those of other, later alternatives. And in support of Hegel's engagement with the dialogues, it seems fair to claim that Hegel's has the distinct virtues of being firmly grounded in the texts available to us; sensitive to the most important stylistic feature of Plato's

philosophical expression, the dialogue form; attentive to the "perspectival" nature of individual dialogues; generous with respect to the possibility that there is some broader unity underlying them; and insistent upon their historical and philosophical significance for philosophy past and future. One may well, in the end, reject Hegel's way of reading Plato's dialogues because one opposes Hegel's own philosophical views, but this cannot be on the grounds that Hegel was an uninformed, naïve, careless, or insensitive reader of Plato.

## Notes

1 On this score, it is worth noting that a philosopher like Kant, lacking an access to Greek texts as that provided by Schleiermacher, mentions Plato only rarely and usually in only very general terms. Certainly, one finds very few discussions of actual classical texts themselves in Kant's works or, indeed, in those of most other major philosophers of the modern era. It is probably also worth mentioning that Schleiermacher himself undertook his impressive translation project under the impetus of the "German classicist movement" associated with Winckelmann, Goethe, and Schiller, which began around the 1770s.

2 In this essay, my citations will be to *Hegel's Lectures on The History of Philosophy* (henceforth LHP) (three volumes), trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1892). While this is an older translation (though recently reissued mostly unchanged), I have checked it against various of the transcripts and notes for Hegel's lecture series and found it to be, for the most part, remarkably reliable. By the way, this is one of those texts that will always remain somewhat problematic since any edition must attempt to negotiate the fact that Hegel's thoughts on the history of philosophy were presented as lectures. These were given on several different occasions, and, in addition to Hegel's own notes, there are also a number of transcripts produced by auditors of these lectures that sometimes provide significant additional materials. For the purposes of this essay, which does not involve any particularly "close reading" of this text, the Haldane and Simson translation is adequate and seems still to be the most readily available source.

3 By comparison, it is surprising in these lectures how little discussion he devotes to modern figures, including Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Hume, and (especially) Kant. Of course, Hegel does deal with them elsewhere, sometimes in considerable detail. But the amount of attention that Plato and Aristotle (and Greek philosophy generally) receive in the *Lectures* at least suggests the importance that Hegel attached to the Greeks for his own view of the history of philosophy and for his broader philosophical project.

4 See G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 8 ff.

5 See, especially, Hegel's critique of "formalism" beginning at Sec. 14 of the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

6 See, for example, Hegel's presentation of this point in the *The Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1969), 413–416.

7 See the section of Hegel's *Science of Logic* entitled "Who thinks abstractly?" for an elaboration of this point.

8 LHP, Vol. 2, 30 ff.; See G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (henceforth *Werke*), eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), Vols. 18–20, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 19: 40 ff.

9 For one of Hegel's strongest statements regarding the essentially "fluid" or "dynamic" nature of thought, see *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Preface, sections 33 and 34.
10 See LHP 2: 10 ff.; Hegel, *Werke* 19: 20 ff. for Hegel's surprisingly extended discussion of the "dialogue form" as well as his running commentary on its inherent limitations as a vehicle for philosophical expression.
11 See LHP 2: 11–13; Hegel, *Werke* 19: 20–22. Hegel doesn't mention the Platonic "Epistles," though they (or at least their existence) were likely known to him. However, one suspects, based on the statement quoted, that Hegel's attitude toward them would have been either that they agree with the philosophy of the dialogues (and are hence superfluous) or, where they don't, they need not figure in any interpretation of Plato's thought, as presented in the dialogues.
12 I might add that Hegel's discounting of most of the historical and literary features of the dialogues in favor of philosophical ideas expressed or implied in them puts him in the company of many, if not most, subsequent readers of Plato, especially those in the "analytic" tradition.
13 LHP 2: 49 ff.; Hegel, *Werke* 19: 60 ff.
14 He also discusses several other dialogues (more briefly, or in passing), including *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Philebus*, *Sophist*, and *Meno*. But it is instructive to note that his discussions of these dialogues focus mainly on Plato's view of the soul, never any "theory of ideas" or "two-world theory."
15 At LHP 2: 56; Hegel, *Werke* 19: 79 Hegel says, "The fully worked-out and genuine dialectic is, however, contained in the *Parmenides*—that most famous masterpiece of Platonic dialectic."
16 At LHP 2: 71; Hegel, *Werke* 19: 86 Hegel writes, "In the *Timaeus* the Idea thus makes its appearance as expressed in its concrete determinateness, and the Platonic philosophy of nature hence teaches us to have a better knowledge of the reality of the world."
17 At LHP 2: 90; Hegel, *Werke* 19: 105 Hegel explicitly labels his discussion of *Republic* "Philosophy of Spirit" (not "Mind," as the translator has it, following conventions for translating "*Geist*" prevailing at the time).
18 LHP 2: 116; Hegel, *Werke* 19: 131.
19 See Kant's discussion in the *Methodenlehre* section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* of the attributes of a "system," a conception that remained fairly constant throughout the history of the subsequent German Idealist movement.
20 See section 17 (p. 10) of the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in which Hegel explicitly claims, "[E]verything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*." (Hegel's emphases).
21 It is perhaps worth noting that Hegel's treatment of Greek tragedy, both in his discussion of Sophocles, *Antigone* in the *Phenomenology* and in his extended accounts of Greek drama in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, seems to require some qualification of his stark claim in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* that the concepts of "subjectivity" and "freedom" are completely foreign to the Greek world.
22 I place in this category a good deal of especially older British Plato scholarship such as that of Cornford and Burnet.

# 5 The Platonic Dimension of Hegel's System

*Lawrence Bruce-Robertson*

## 1. Introduction

In this essay, I argue that we can better understand Hegel's conception of philosophy by attending to a project in Plato's middle dialogues that demands that philosophy be a "science of the Good" (where "the Good" is understood as the principle of all things). The *Meno, Phaedo, Republic*, and *Parmenides* develop the idea of philosophy as the journey towards a knowledge that is absolute and comprehensive, rational and teleological. Plato develops a "second-best" method in the service of this science, but Plato's self-criticism in the *Parmenides* leaves us in an *aporia* focused on the *chorismos* (separation) of form (*eidos*) and participant that is essential to that method. Hegel takes up this Platonic project and the *aporia* it leads to, and transforms it into a demand for a systematic "speculative" thinking. Outside of philosophy in its true form, the least inadequate expression of what this is demands the categories of religious representation, in which the truth is thought of as a divine going forth and return to self, an activity of self-determining and knowing that has the structure of self-consciousness. Hegel's conception of philosophy as speculative dialectic is best understood as a journey that ends in the self-discovery that in true philosophy we are this divine return—a kind of recollection that, if actual, would overcome the Platonic *chorismos* and complete Plato's project of a science of the Good. If the system is successful, philosophy will know itself as having risen up the Platonic line to the dialectical unity of knowing subject and object known, so that it knows itself as all actuality. Hegel argues that in any act of thinking, we are already engaged in the process of rising to this divine perspective.

I will begin with an overview of what I see as Plato's central and unifying project in his middle dialogues. This is a project that attempts to work out the nature of philosophy (or the knowledge proper to philosophy) and the ground of its possibility. It begins to be formulated in the *Meno*, is developed in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* (among other dialogues), and is then assessed in the *Parmenides*.[1] Plato's project leads to the demand that philosophy be what I have called a science of the Good. I have defended this position elsewhere. For the purpose of this paper, I must simply stipulate it, along with the claim that it is consistent with Hegel's own interpretation

of Plato as found in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*.[2] I will then turn to Hegel's conception of philosophy as speculative and as system, and argue that his own project is best thought of as taking up and transforming the Platonic project. This is contrary to many standard non-metaphysical readings and to explicitly anti-Platonic pragmatist readings of Hegel. Scholars interested in the relation between the ancients and Hegel have tended to pay closer attention to the relation between Aristotle and Hegel than to the relation between Plato and Hegel.[3] This is appropriate if one's focus is on the elaboration of specific doctrines. So, for instance, Alfredo Ferrarin has argued that understanding Aristotle's category of actuality and Hegel's interpretation of this is helpful in understanding Hegel's concept of the subject, and particularly Hegel's concept of spirit as both substance and subject.[4] I believe that looking to Plato is more helpful in understanding Hegel's approach at a programmatic level; that is to say, in understanding the context of such doctrines.

## 2. Plato's Project: A Science of The Good

Throughout Plato's middle dialogues, we find a demand that philosophical knowledge be absolute in the sense of final.[5] That is, it cannot be a theory that stands in need of justification. Philosophic knowledge is not a species of belief. Connected to this is the assumption that such knowledge is in principle, or potentially, comprehensive. The metaphysical view, which goes hand-in-hand with this epistemological view, is of the soul, not as a thing, but as an activity. It is primarily the activity of recollecting the truth, an activity that is rational and free. We can understand how a movement from belief to knowledge is possible in this context. That movement is not what one might expect from a commonsense perspective, namely, that we begin with opinions or beliefs (I use these interchangeably for Plato's *doxa*) and sort out their truth or falsity according to evidence, coming to a reasoned position of justified belief (which, if true, would count as knowledge). Rather, in Plato's view, we do begin with opinions, but through the recognition of their deficiency, we are turned inward to a truth recollected. The starting point—opinion—is the occasion of the inward turn, but it is not a stepping-stone in the sense of a premise of an argument nor is it an epistemological unit that remains present in knowing.

How could this journey towards the truth be possible? The way in which Plato envisions its possibility is that the object of *epistēmē* (knowledge proper) is the Good, understood as the first principle, productive of all that is other than it—productive of both the being of what is known, and the knowing of it.[6] Here Plato has taken on and transformed Anaxagoras's *nous*, now understood as a comprehensive principle that is both rational and teleological.[7] With this transformation, we can say that for Plato knowledge is absolute in a second sense: it is knowledge *of* the Absolute, and it is, in part, by being such that it can be absolute in the first sense mentioned: final

and comprehensive. The doctrine of recollection presents *epistēmē* as proper to the soul and so presents the soul as desiring *epistēmē*. This is a teleological view in which the activity of the soul consists in the repossession of a content proper to it. In knowing the Good, the soul is returning to its self. However, direct knowledge of the Good has eluded Plato, and so he presents us with a *deuteros plous* or "second-best method" (an indirect method) of knowing it.[8] *Epistēmē* becomes the knowing of forms (*eidē*), understood as divine, intelligible, self-identical, fully real, and causes of the sensible (the reality of which is parasitic on the reality of the forms).[9] This second-best method is presented in the *Phaedo* through the laying down of three hypotheses: the forms, sensible participants, and the relation of participation.

It should be noted that "hypothesis" in Plato means a starting point for inquiry. This should not be confused with the modern scientific sense of "hypothesis" as a theory standing in need of verification. They are related, since we turn to each out of a desire for explanation, but the distinction is important.[10] Reference to Descartes is helpful in understanding this. In Descartes's *Meditations* the existence of God is not a hypothesis in the modern scientific sense. For it to be so, we would need to know something else first, for which the hypothesis was offered as explanation. But for Descartes, our first knowledge is of God, and this knowledge mediates all other knowledge (our first *certainty* is the I's self-certainty, but our first *knowledge* is of God). Descartes's God is explanatory, indeed is at the center of all explanation, but not in the sense of a modern hypothesis. We can speak of Plato's Good as a hypothesis (laid down as a starting point), but it functions as an over-arching goal: the knowledge of it, if achieved, would be explanatory of all else (and so the Good would cease to be a hypothesis). Within the context of knowledge of the Good as our goal, the Forms are laid down as a starting point in the second-best method. The philosophical activity of Plato's Socrates makes no sense unless we understand him to be standing in a relation to the Good from the beginning. For this reason, his "ignorance" is never simply an emptiness. Hegel's starting points are similar to Plato's in being starting points for inquiry, not premises, observations or evidence (understood as bases for proof). Hegel says of any beginning that, as a beginning, it is a presupposition, but his point is that in the end it must cease to be this if we are to really know, and not simply have dogmatic opinion.[11]

In its three central images, the *Republic* draws together the metaphysical and epistemological sides of the Platonic second-best method. The image of the sun treats the Good as first principle.[12] The image of the line treats the inward journey of the mind and its process of recollection, in which the movement from opinion to knowledge involves moving from what is both ontologically and epistemologically posterior to what is prior.[13] At the top of the line we have *noēsis*, the unhypothetical knowing of the Good through the forms. This is distinguished from the penultimate section, *dianoia*. While both begin from hypotheses, *dianoia* reasons from hypotheses as given, whereas *noēsis* treats these hypotheses *as* hypotheses, and in so

doing moves beyond them to an unhypothetical knowing.[14] The allegory of the cave unites these two images, presenting philosophy as the ascent out of the cave to a vision of the Good—that is, to a science of the Good that would know it as productive of all else.[15]

## 3. Plato's Self-Criticism in the *Parmenides*

In the *Parmenides*, Plato steps back from the development of this second-best method and questions its efficacy, which more generally means that he questions how philosophy is possible. The result of Plato's self-criticism is the judgment that the second-best method has only enabled what Hegel will later call an "external reflection." In other words, it is a way of thinking about the Good based on certain assumptions, but not a thinking of the Good from the inside out: a thinking that would know it as productive of all that is other than it.[16] In the dialogue, such a "divine knowledge" appears to be too exalted for us, yet it is also asserted that without it, discourse (and with it philosophy) would fail.[17] The examination of the logic of participation arises from Socrates's response to Zeno's challenge that we cannot think a finitude—a plurality of finite things—and hence that there could not *be* such a finitude. In the first part of the *Parmenides*, a discussion between Socrates and Parmenides clarifies two issues: that in the second-best method the forms are intended to be truly comprehensive causes, and that a *chorismos* of form from participant has been necessary to the method.[18] The dialogue then develops a series of criticisms of the second-best method, which can be interpreted as exposing our inability to think the relation of participation scientifically, rather than simply assuming it.[19]

The discussion between Parmenides and Socrates is best understood not as a competitive argument between two schools of thought, but as Plato's attempt to think through the logic of the second-best method. Under pressure from Parmenides's criticism, Socrates presents successive ways of thinking about the forms, the many, and the relation of participation. Each way is intended to grasp the logic of participation, though it is clear that Socrates thinks each is inadequate. Because of that inadequacy, each way stands in need of interpretation. For each, Socrates gives an interpretation that retains the self-identity of the form, but at the expense of being unable to express how the form is explanatory of the many that participate in it. For each, Parmenides gives an alternative interpretation (equally reasonable) in which attempting to live up to the demand that the form be explanatory of the many results in the form being endlessly different from itself, and so losing its self-identity. If we choose Parmenides's set of interpretations, then we have an argument that the logic of participation reveals a world in which real being (as opposed to the historical Parmenides's apparent being) is endless difference. This is a Heraclitean world (and hence, for Parmenides, a criticism of the theory of forms). If we choose Socrates's set of interpretations, then we have an argument that the logic of participation reveals a world in which

real being is immediate, undivided unity. This is a Parmenidean world. Each argument is reasonable. Hence, we are left in the position in which it is merely a matter of subjective choice which alternative we follow. What the dialogue has been unable to determine is how these two understandings of participation can be held together in one unified account. For there to be such a unified account, we would need to be able to think the unity of unity and difference. It is only if we could do this that we could know the form to be self-identical and yet cause of all division and difference. Until we can do this, we are only thinking abstractions, not what is real.

From an external vantage point, we can relate form and participant to one another, but we cannot see how, out of itself, the form is productive of the sensible. This means that we have not really thought the form (since what it *is*, is the cause of the sensible) nor have we discovered the intelligibility of the sensible. The context of the criticism of the second-best method in the *Parmenides* makes it clear that if we have not been able to discover the intelligibility of the sensible, then we have not understood how the sensible could even *be* at all. This predicament is summed up in the final criticism developed in the *Parmenides*, which results in the conclusion that there is an intelligible world known by the divine, and a sensible world known by us, but that, equally, such a division would make the latter (a merely human knowledge) impossible. This could be stated in terms of Plato's image of the divided line in the following way: there is found to be no movement from the lower line to the upper line, and yet if there is no movement there can be no lower line. The idea presented is that if *epistēmē* (the rise to a science of the Good) is not possible for us, we do not have the alternative of turning to a more mundane knowledge (and with it a less demanding conception of philosophy). It would appear that it is a case of all or nothing (to borrow a phrase from Paul Franks).[20]

## 4. Hegel's System as Taking Up and Transforming Plato's Project

I will argue that Hegel takes very seriously this Platonic view of knowledge and its proper object, along with the problems it presents, and that we miss something important in Hegel if we downplay this aspect of his thought. My contention is not that Hegel is a Platonist, any more than he is an Aristotelian, a Neoplatonist, an Augustinian, a Cartesian, a Spinozist, or a Kantian. Hegel would be none and yet all of these, for he looks on the history of philosophy as a unified development of thinking itself, and takes his own system to be the expression of what that development has achieved.[21] However, what I do contend is that, far from rejecting Plato, Hegel understands that development to have taken up and furthered Plato's project of the middle dialogues as I have expressed it. This is important, because many Hegel scholars (and also philosophers who turn to Hegel for inspiration) interpret, or assume, Hegel to be anti-Platonic—and it is crucially important

to them that he *be* anti-platonic.[22] I suggest that this often takes the form of an initial assumption that then colors the interpretation.

Treating Hegel as anti-Platonic is conducive to downplaying the teleological element in his thought (which, for Hegel, means downplaying the teleological structure of the actual) and serves to stress one side of two important oppositions: finite human thinking over infinite, divine thinking, and historical contingency over eternal truth. Furthermore, if we stress the side of finitude in human thinking we will naturally be inclined to set aside from the start Hegel's idea of speculative thinking, and so to set aside the very form that he claims truly philosophical thought must take. Without being self-consciously anti-Platonic, a reading of Hegel which stresses his thought as primarily developing out of and responding to Kant will not necessarily stress one side over the other of these oppositions, but will have a natural tendency to think Hegel must begin on the side of the finite (where Kant has firmly established us) and move (mysteriously or problematically) to the side of the infinite. To be a Platonist might mean stressing the contrary pole in these oppositions, but to be a Hegelian is to look to their unity. Understanding why Hegel does this and what it would mean to do it requires attending to his synthesis of much more than just his immediate philosophic predecessors. The result, if successful, will be to have developed a schematic view of an important element of Hegel's project. This is an important task, because the exact nature of what Hegel is trying to accomplish is so much in contention amongst scholars, and philosophers more generally who would make use of Hegel. Our view of what Hegel is trying to accomplish will inform the particular interpretation of any specific text.

Focusing on the Platonic strain in Hegel will enable us to better understand the ever-present aspect of the divine in his argument (as more than metaphor or rhetorical flourish) and with this, his conception of philosophy as "speculative" (in form and content) and as system. In developing a charitable reading of the texts, I assume we remain open to the possibility that Hegel is right about the nature of philosophy. If he is, then we cannot give an abstract account of his dialectic or, more generally, of "speculative philosophy" that would be adequate to it.[23] Hegel's dialectic is not a method that can be formalized. Neither is it a method that is applied to an indifferent content. Properly speaking, "dialectic" refers to the whole movement of the *Phenomenology* and the *Encyclopedia*: it is the structure of concrete (and therefore true) thinking that is no less the structure of actuality. This leaves us in the difficult position of treating the dialectic at either extreme of the macro- or the micro-level, for there is no convenient middle ground. To understand even this is to understand something important about Hegel's conception of philosophy.

Furthermore, the content of this true thinking (Hegel's system) cannot be articulated as a set of propositions, each of which we can understand independently and then ask if it is warranted. Meaning and justification are not independent in Hegel's system. This is part of what it means for content and

form to be united in philosophy, a claim of Hegel's that must appear *prima facie* quite strange. Hence the whole movement of the *Encyclopedia* has a structural similarity to Descartes' *cogito*: it is something that we must enter into ourselves and discover for ourselves what the result is. When so understood, "dialectic" and "speculative philosophy" are almost, but not quite, synonymous. Borrowing an image from Hegel, to take them as synonymous would be to take a circle as just its circumference without its center (whereas in truth there is no circle without their unity). Although we cannot give a fully adequate abstract account of Hegel's dialectic, the theological dimension of Hegel's system which I develop here will help to orient us to it, so that the details are more meaningful. It will also help in making sense of Hegel's closely related idea (or better, demand) that thinking be concrete.

For Hegel, following Plato, philosophy is understood as a journey to the truth. And specifically *as* a journey, its overall form will not be the standard syllogistic argumentation philosophers might reasonably expect. This journey can be thought of as an ascent out of the Platonic cave, or up the Platonic line, to an unhypothetical knowing in which the content of knowledge does not consist in beliefs, or have the form of a theory. Rather, for Hegel knowledge will be the truth knowing itself. Further, if Hegel is right we will see that in an important sense this is an act of recollection. My claim is that Hegel's conception of the basic structure of knowledge as self-consciousness (the truth knowing itself) is best understood in terms of his incorporation and transformation of Plato's project of seeking a science of the Good. Understanding this conception demands taking seriously the theological dimension in Hegel's philosophy.

In the concluding paragraphs of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel writes: "This [concept] of philosophy is the self-thinking Idea, the truth aware of itself (§236)—the logical system, but with the signification that it is universality approved and certified in concrete content as in its actuality."[24] And further: "The eternal Idea, in full fruition of its essence, eternally sets itself to work, engenders and enjoys itself as absolute [Spirit]."[25] Hegel closes the work with a quotation from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Book Lambda, vii, 1072b 18–30. It is important to understand when we read this passage that Hegel takes Aristotle to be completing Plato's science of the Good.[26] In the passage, Aristotle says that God is the principle on which the heavens and the world of nature depend, and that this principle is to be understood as divine thinking, an active contemplation without any potentiality, in which thought and its object are the same, and further that "life also belongs to God. For the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God's self-dependent actuality is life most good and eternal."[27]

What makes this quotation an appropriate ending to the *Encyclopedia* is that, to use Hegel's technical language, the *Encyclopedia* is meant to have been a thinking through of the Idea which is first found in Plato (as the Good) and further determined in Aristotle (as God) in a more fully *concrete* manner. As is typical of Hegel, he wishes at the end of the *Encyclopedia* to

return to the seed with which it began. Hegel uses the term "Concept" for the end that makes an activity what it is (understood as its moving principle) and "Idea" for that activity as fully actual (we misunderstand both terms if we do not understand them teleologically). He finds in Aristotle's account of God a sublime insight into God as that activity which is absolutely free (self-determined), complete, and infinite in the sense of being the principle of itself and of everything else ("the heavens and the world of nature"). The project of the *Encyclopedia* is to develop that account of God further as the unity of the infinite and finite, and ultimately as Hegel's Idea.

Knowledge understood as the truth knowing itself will have the character of finality in being comprehensive, systematic, self-relational, and therefore self-justifying. If, in a very preliminary way, we wish to grasp Hegel's idea of the self-relational and therefore self-justifying character of *all* knowledge (not just limited forms of finite self-consciousness), we are best served by theological terms. In Descartes' *cogito*, thought is immediately certain of itself; there is no mediation of its certainty through something other than what it is certain of. In this there is a circularity, but not a problematic circularity: thought must *be*, to be certain of itself. The certainty is self-contained or self-justified.[28] Now consider the ancient (and also medieval) idea of God as the pure activity of divine thinking knowing itself, and imagine this as a divine Cartesian *cogito*. Add to this Hegel's view that God's divine activity has nature and history within it, that nature and history are the outward expression of this activity, and that knowing is the return to that of which these are an expression. This "divine *cogito*" (here not just certain of itself, but knowing itself) is self-enclosed, not in the sense of being cut off from anything other, but through being all that is actual. As self-enclosed it will be self-justifying. Hegel will even speak of it as an immediate knowing (because it is not mediated by anything outside of it, since nothing actual is outside of it) or as an act of self-mediation.[29]

The over-arching structure of the movement to this absolute knowing (the truth knowing itself) is properly understood as the movement from the less adequate to the fully adequate. This is in contrast to the movement of a deduction in which we begin with an isolated truth or truths and, via a truth-preserving form of inference, move to some other isolated truth(s). In contrast to the idea of inference as preserving truth, in Hegel we must speak of a movement of thought in and through which the truth develops. This is also different from an "inference to the best explanation," because that must start with something adequately known which stands in need of explanation. For the same reason, while Hegel's approach is often similar to a transcendental argument, the over-arching structure cannot be so understood (because there is no given which remains simply as a given, and so no stable ground from which to develop a transcendental argument).[30] If such a Hegelian movement or journey is possible, it will turn out to have a teleological structure, though one only known explicitly and fully in retrospect.[31]

Hegel understands his system (or, as he would say, philosophy itself) to have an internal teleological structure. As such it is, as a whole, a kind of self-discovery, which has the form of a return to self. We will find this conception of philosophy easier to imagine if we think of God's self-knowledge, and more specifically of God's creative act and knowledge of himself in this. (Hegel would add that in this divine knowledge God knows creation as necessary to himself, knows that he must manifest himself.)[32] It is more difficult to understand this conception in terms of a knowing *presumed* finite (I will explain this qualification at the end of the paper). It must suffice to say here that Hegel understands there to be, ultimately, a unity of the divine and human, and so he will speak of Spirit or of Reason *simpliciter* coming to know itself in its other. This is a form of self-consciousness, but not where self-consciousness is understood as *opposed* to consciousness of something else.

In terms of Plato's image of the line, philosophy is the movement upwards in which the opposition of subject and object is increasingly overcome, until in the end there is a distinction but no opposition. It is for this reason that in true knowing, for Hegel as for Plato, it no longer makes sense to speak of belief or theory—there is no gap between knower and known that would make such concepts relevant.[33] We might term this an "identity theory" of truth, but we would have to be careful in this. The sense of "identity" would have to be Hegelian, which is to say a dialectical identity, not the straightforward identity of ordinary logic.[34]

The *Phenomenology* presents us with the idea that consciousness just *is* knowing, and (when rational) is always seeking to be a true knowing. The journey that proceeds from the capacity of consciousness for self-critique leads consciousness to find that the true structure of knowledge is the structure of self-consciousness. This journey brings it to the point of being certain of the identity of subject and object, knower and known, and reveals that, as rational (as thinking), we are always already in the process of rising up the Platonic line to the perspective of this identity. Hegel's *Encyclopedia* is intended to be the articulation of that (Hegelian) unity, that is, of absolute knowing. To be more precise about the form in which Hegel thinks this must be understood (i.e., to be more precise about the intention of the *Encyclopedia*): our own thinking through of the content of the *Encyclopedia* from the perspective of the Concept is to be thought's recollection of this dialectical unity of subject and object. To actually possess such knowledge in which the opposition of subject and object is overcome—or, from Hegel's perspective, to be the activity that is this knowing—would be to overcome the Platonic *chorismos* of intelligible and sensible.

Hegel's way of asserting that the Platonic *chorismos* is, in principle, overcome (or from the standpoint of the *Encyclopedia*, has been overcome) is to speak of thought as "overgrasping" (*übergreifen*)[35] its other: "It will be seen in the *Logic* that this is just what thought and the universal are: that thought is itself and its other, that it overgrasps its other and that nothing

escapes it."[36] And further: "If we regard thinking as what is genuinely universal in everything natural and everything spiritual, too, then it overgrasps all of them and is the foundation of them all."[37] We cannot construe Hegel's claim about the power of thought in terms of the power of mental representations, where a mental representation is taken to be one finite thing "grasping" another finite thing (its object), provided it stands in a right relation to that object (where the "right relation" is specified by our preferred epistemological theory). For Hegel, abstract, representational thought thinks about objects. It is finite. But concrete thought thinks the universal (not the abstract universal but the concrete universal). It is infinite. Concrete thinking does not just think about the concrete universal, it is the concrete universal itself, re-enacting itself.[38] In this infinite thinking there is a distinction between thought and its object, but that distinction lies within the unity of thought that is its ground. The ability to both uphold and overcome the distinction between thought and its object is the power of "overgrasping."[39] If Hegel is wrong that thought has this power, then his distinction between the "understanding" and "reason" collapses.[40]

We can see a direct relation to Anaxagoras as intuiting the overgrasping of thought in his principle, *nous*, and Hegel naturally refers to him (without mentioning him by name) in the introductory section of the *Encyclopedia*:

> [T]he Logical is to be sought in a system of thought-determinations in which the antithesis between subjective and objective (in its usual meaning) disappears. This meaning of thinking and of its determinations is more precisely expressed by the Ancients when they say that *nous* governs the world or by our own saying that there is reason in the world, by which we mean that reason is the soul of the world, inhabits it, and is immanent in it, as its own, innermost nature, its universal.[41]

Hegel's central idea of thought overgrasping its other is first expressed in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*, where it is argued that it must obtain, even if we do not understand how. An important part of the argument in the Introduction is that, as strange as it may seem, for us to be able to compare what we take to be our knowledge of an object with the object itself (in order to evaluate the adequacy of our knowing) thought must already be on both sides of the opposition of thinking and being, so that this comparison can take place within thought.[42] It is the possibility of this self-critique that enables the movement of the *Phenomenology*. That the distinction of thinking and being could itself be within thinking we might more easily grant if we have in mind a divine thinking, Plato's Good understood now as divine activity (and so as subject as well as substance). That activity in its totality is Hegel's "actuality." For Hegel, an important development in the history of philosophy between Plato and Aristotle is that Aristotle has come to see the first principle in terms of *energeia* and *entelecheia*, which Hegel interprets as meaning that the first principle is pure spontaneous

activity having its end in itself and being the realization of this end.[43] This is not, in Hegel's judgment, a turning away from Plato's view, but rather its completion.[44] It requires only a small—though significant—step to get to Hegel's conception of this pure activity as subject.[45] One might say, with this Hegelian conception, that Plato's Good becomes the one activity that is the creating and overcoming of the *chorismos*.

It is not accidental that, when he is lecturing on the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel thinks of both Plato and Aristotle at the point where the category of actuality is introduced. Hegel argues that both the terms "thought" and "actuality" are misused (or misunderstood) when used in philosophical discussion in the same way as they are customarily used in ordinary life. In ordinary life, "thought" is used to refer to what is abstract and to what is often an unrealized, or even an unrealizable, goal, and "actual" is used to refer to anything that happens to exist. Hegel comments that

> actuality certainly does form the principle of Aristotle's philosophy, but his actuality is that of the Idea itself, and not the ordinary actuality of what is immediately present. More precisely, therefore, Aristotle's polemic against Plato consists in his designation of the Platonic Idea as mere *dunamis*, and in urging, on the contrary, that the Idea, which is recognized by both of them equally to be what is alone true, should be regarded essentially as *energeia*.[46]

I said that we might more easily grant that the distinction between thinking and being could itself be within thinking if we have in mind a divine thinking. It is more difficult to understand what this could mean in the context of finite human thinking. But Hegel's contention is that there really is no such thing as *merely* finite thinking: if philosophy—conceived of as rising up the Platonic line—were to possess its goal (or: if philosophy were, as activity, in possession of itself), we would come to see that there is a unity of infinite and finite in the thinking of the truth. Hegel's further contention is that insofar as we think at all, we are already in the process of rising to this perspective (and so our thinking is never merely finite):

> [T]he inward journey of the spirit . . . is a *thinking* journey and it thinks what is sensory. The *elevation* of thinking above the sensible, its *going out* above the finite to the infinite, the *leap* that is made into the supersensible when the sequences of the sensible are broken off, all this is thinking itself; this transition is *only thinking*. To say that this passage ought not to take place means that there is to be no thinking.[47]

In the end, if we know Hegel's claim to be true, it will be in the form of a truth discovered, not proven—at least not in the usual sense of poof in which one claim is warranted by others. It will be thinking returning to itself in knowing itself as infinite.

Put in terms of religious representation, Hegel's view is that God (understood as pure, free and complete activity, as both substance and subject) actualizes himself in and through nature and history, and that the culmination of this self-actualization is a self-knowing in and through *our* knowing. That divine self-knowing (which is necessarily a divine-human knowing) is philosophy in the truest sense. The category of Spirit is central to Hegel, in part because through it he attempts to grasp that this process does not leave the finite individual superfluous (it is not a form of divine solipsism) nor does it leave God out (it is not a form of naturalism). Hegel speaks of "Spirit" *simpliciter*, because it is at once human and divine. Spirit is a very rich category for Hegel and I am only addressing one aspect of it, due to my focus in this paper on the theoretical over the practical. The German *Geist* is doubly rich for Hegel, as our English translation cannot be for us.[48] It is now a commonplace to criticize early translators who used "Mind" for *Geist*, rather than "Spirit." I agree that this was misleading, but mainly because of the sense of mind as a thing that acts, rather than as pure activity itself. For Hegel, both the spiritual and the intellectual senses of *Geist* are important. The spiritual sense—with particular reference to the Holy Spirit of the Christian Trinity—is crucial, for it expresses the dimension of an infinite activity present in the community of finite individuals. The intellectual sense is important because, to speak in religious terms, God's return to himself is a thinking return (manifested in art, religion, and philosophy):

> The need for philosophy can be determined more precisely in the following manner. As feeling and intuition the spirit has what is sensible for its [object]; as fantasy, it has images; and as will, purposes, etc. But the spirit needs also, in *antithesis* to, or merely in *distinction from these forms* of its thereness and of its [objects], to give satisfaction to its highest inwardness, *to thinking*, and to make thinking its [object]. In this way, spirit comes *to itself*, in the deepest sense of the word; for its principle, its unadulterated selfhood, is thinking.[49]

## 5. Conclusion

I have argued that we can better understand Hegel's conception of philosophy by attending to a project in Plato's middle dialogues which develops a conception of philosophy as the journey towards a knowledge that is absolute and comprehensive, rational and teleological. This knowledge is best conceived as a science of the Good (understood as the principle of all things). It becomes clear that such knowledge cannot be construed as a species of belief, but by the end of Plato's self-criticism in the *Parmenides*, it is not clear how our thinking could be adequate to the task.

We are called to a divine thinking that nevertheless remains out of reach. Hegel understands this to be an *aporia* which philosophy must work through (more precisely he would say philosophy must work through this *aporia* in

order to come into possession of itself). We see this already happening in the philosophy of Aristotle. Hegel himself further transforms this Platonic project into a demand for a systematic speculative thinking—that thinking which is adequate to unifying historical contingency and eternal truth, as also finite and infinite thinking. The least inadequate expression of what this is, outside of philosophy in its true form, demands the categories of religious representation in which the truth is thought of as a divine going forth and return to self, an activity of self-determining and knowing which has the structure of self-consciousness. I have spoken of this as a "divine *cogito*."

Hegel's conception of dialectic is best understood as a journey that ends in the self-discovery that in true philosophy we are this divine return. It is a kind of recollection that, if actual, would overcome the Platonic *chorismos* and complete Plato's project of a science of the Good. The system, if complete, will *just be* our thinking, in which we are no longer only *referring* to the content which is the truth, but are simply that content thinking itself (Plato's Good now comprehended as subject and substance, Hegel's Absolute Spirit). Again, if the system is successful, philosophy will know itself as having risen up the Platonic line to the dialectical unity of knowing subject and object known. As such it will know itself as all actuality. This is what it is for thinking to be "concrete." This conception of philosophy might seem no less an *aporia* to us than the division between a divine knowing and a human knowing, consequent on the *chorismos* of form and participant, seemed to Plato in the *Parmenides*. Hegel's response is to present us with the idea that any and all thinking is always already rising to the divine perspective.

## Notes

1 I accept J. N. Findlay's general ordering of the Platonic dialogues on the basis of their philosophical content. I see the *Meno* and the *Parmenides* as framing the period of the middle dialogues. See J. N. Findlay, *Plato and Platonism* (New York: Times Books, 1978) and *Plato: The Written and Unwritten Doctrines* (New York: Humanities Press, 1974).

2 This paper is a synthesis of some lines of thought that I pursue in my doctoral dissertation, *The Project of Speculative Thinking in Hegel's Philosophy*. I thank David Peddle and Bob Wallace for helpful criticisms of an earlier draft.

3 An exception is M. B. Foster in *The Political Philosophies of Plato and Hegel* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1935).

4 See Alfredo Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

5 Plato presents us with the idea of knowledge proper, what is sought in philosophy, which must be distinguished from what we in ordinary practical life might call "knowledge." At the end of the *Meno* (86c—100b), what we might call "knowledge" in an ordinary sense is closer to what Plato discusses as true belief or opinion (99a). Plato does not use one term consistently for knowledge (or for knowing). *Epistēmē* is one term he uses, and I will use this to refer to what I take to be knowledge proper for him. Stephanus pagination is used for all references to Plato's works.

6 The Good is introduced in *Republic* Book Five, 504d—511e. A central question at the heart of much of the history of Platonism is whether the Good completely transcends the distinction of knowing and being, or whether this distinction is within the unity of the Good itself. Hegel takes the latter view.
7 See *Phaedo* 99a—105c.
8 Literally "second sailing," *Phaedo* 99d. I take the standard interpretation of this as a "second-best" method to be correct.
9 I take James Doull's interpretation of the forms as the necessary determinations of the Good to be the most plausible, but there is much room for interpretative debate here. On the character of Forms, see *Phaedo* 75d—80b. For Doull's view, see "Plato's *Parmenides*," in *Philosophy and Freedom: The Legacy of James Doull*, ed. D. Peddle and N. Robertson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).
10 Julia Annas has commented on this. See *New Perspectives on Plato, Ancient and Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 12n38.
11 See, for example, *The Encyclopedia Logic* (henceforth referred to by paragraph numbers in *Enz.*: *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*), trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Co., 1991); G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (henceforth *Werke*), eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), Vol. 8 (*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* I), §§1–18. Citations of Hegel's works are made as follows: page or paragraph (§) number in English text, followed by page number in German text or section (§) number alone, where this is identical in the English and German texts. Hegel's published remarks (*Anmerkungen*) are indicated by an "R." Additions (*Zusätze*) are indicated by an "A." When there are multiple additions to a paragraph these are numbered as "A1," etc.
12 *Republic* Book Six, 506d—509b.
13 *Republic* Book Six, 509d—511e.
14 *Republic* Book Six, 511b.
15 *Republic* Book Seven, 514ff.
16 For instructive examples of Hegel's use of "external reflection" see *Hegel's Science of Logic* (henceforth SL), trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Humanity Books, 1998), 27; *Wissenschaft der Logik*: *Erster Teil* (henceforth WL), ed. G. Lasson (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1963), 5–6. See also SL 233; WL 231, and also *Enz.*, §28 A.
17 *Parmenides* 133a—135c.
18 *Parmenides* 130a—131a.
19 *Parmenides* 131a—135c. Another way to put this is to say that once the *chorismos* (the separation of form and sensible) has been posited, we are unable to see how the form can overcome this.
20 See Paul Franks, *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005). Caught in this Platonic *aporia*, we find ourselves in a situation similar to that which one twentieth-century interpreter of Hegel, Emil Fackenheim, believes Hegel leaves us in. Fackenheim sees Hegel as the culmination of the Western philosophical tradition, and Fackenheim thinks that we cannot set aside Hegel's aspiration to an absolute knowing, yet our experience is that we have failed. See the concluding chapter, "The Crisis of the Hegelian Middle," in *The Religious Dimension of Hegel's Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 232–244.
21 See, for example, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (henceforth LHP), trans. E. S. Haldane and F. H. Simpson, 3 vols. (New York: The Humanities

Press, 1974), Vol. 2, 13–14; Hegel, *Werke* 19 (*Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* II): 23–24.

22 This is generally true of the Hegelian left. We find it in Alexandre Kojève. It is also true of more recent non-metaphysical readings of Hegel (Klaus Hartmann, Terry Pinkard, Paul Redding and others). Richard Rorty and Robert Brandom are examples of philosophers whose interest is in finding inspiration in, and making use of, aspects of Hegel for their own work (without the intention of developing a thorough reading of Hegel for its own sake) and for whom an anti-Platonism is an important component of what they see as right in Hegel. For Brandom there is a fundamental divide in philosophy between either beginning with Platonism or with a non-Platonist approach (which for him leads to pragmatism). On Rorty and Hegel, see Nathan Rotenstreich, "Rorty's Interpretation of Hegel," *The Review of Metaphysics* 39, no. 2 (Dec. 1985): 321–333.

23 For examples of Hegel noting this inevitable difficulty, see SL, 59–60; WL 41–42, as well as SL 70; WL 54–55.

24 *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind* (henceforth cited by paragraph numbers in *Enz.*), trans. W. Wallace and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971); Hegel, *Werke* 10 (*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* III), §574.

25 *Enz.* §577.

26 See LHP 2: 117–118; Hegel, *Werke* 19: 132–133. Also: LHP 2: 134–141; *Werke* 19: 149–156. James Doull has developed Hegel's view on the relation between Plato and Aristotle. For an overview of this, see Lawrence Bruce-Robertson, "An Introduction to James Doull's Interpretation of Aristotle," *Animus: The Canadian Journal of Philosophy and Humanities* 10 (2005). http://www2.swgc.mun.ca/animus/vol10.html.

27 This comes with an oblique reference to human thinking as desiring this best state. Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, trans. W. D. Ross, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), Book *Lambda*, ch. vii, 1072b 27–1072b 29 (Bekker pagination). What remains ambiguous in Aristotle, both in the passage that Hegel quotes and in the equally famous similar passage in *Nicomachean Ethics*, X.7, is whether we humans are capable of rising to this divine thinking or not, and if so, to what extent. Hegel is more optimistic than most commentators take Aristotle to be.

28 See "Second Meditation," René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*.

29 For example, see *Enz.* §213 A, and *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (henceforth PhS), trans. by A. V. Miller. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) §18; *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (henceforth PhG), ed. H-F. Wessels and H. Clairmont, Vol. 414 of *Philosophische Bibliothek* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1988), 14.

30 None of this means that we cannot find deductions and transcendental arguments *within* the larger fabric of Hegel's system, only that the over-arching form cannot be of either sort.

31 For one helpful schematic account of this see "With What Must the Science Begin?" in SL 67–78; WL 51–64.

32 Determining the exact nature of the "must" here raises deep questions about Hegel's comprehension of the unity of freedom and necessity in the Concept and with this the comprehension of the unity of the eternal and the temporal. From within the perspective of time, the actualization of the Concept as Idea is known as a result.

33 Thus LHP 2: 148; Hegel, *Werke* 19: 163: "We [Hegel] in our way of speaking designate the Absolute, the True, as the unity of subjectivity and objectivity, which is therefore neither the one nor the other, and yet just as much the one as the other." For this as the result of the argument of the *Phenomenology* (stated necessarily in an external form) see SL 60; WL 42–43.

34 For a dense expression of this movement, see PhS §804; PhG 527–528.
35 The more usual translation of *übergreifen* is "to overreach" (used, for example, by Caird, Fackenheim, and Inwood). Like *aufheben*, *übergreifen* is a foundational concept in Hegel's work that defies straightforward definition and so any translation will be contentious. I am following the lead of Geraets, Suchting, and Harris in their translation of the *Encyclopedia Logic* by translating *übergreifen* with the neologism "to overgrasp." They make the following comment on their choice: "Hegel uses *übergreifen* to express the positive aspect of the process of *Aufhebung*. The concept that results from speculative 'comprehension' (*begreifen*) reaches back and 'overgrasps' the opposition of the moments produced by thought in its dialectical stage. The metaphor comes from Stoic tradition. . . . 'Overgrasp' is not to be found in our dictionaries. But anyone who reflects upon Zeno's metaphor will see why we need it, and how different the meaning is from any of the current uses of 'overreach' " (Introduction to G.W.F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, xxvi–xxvii). "Overreach" can be especially misleading because of its connotations of hubris and failure. On Hegel's use of *übergreifen* see E. Caird, Hegel, vol. 2 of *Collected Works of Edward Caird* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1999), 122; E. Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension of Hegel's Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 20, 28–29, 96–114; and M. Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1992), entry for "triads," 295–298.
36 *Enz.*, §20 R. See also PhS, §166; PhG, 120.
37 *Enz.*, §24 A1.
38 See *Enz.* §20 on thinking as "the self-actuating universal."
39 To state this from the perspective of one outside Hegel's system we would have to say that talk of thought "overgrasping" its object is a short-form for claiming that thought is, in truth, infinite in the sense stated above, just as a term like "supervenience" in much contemporary philosophy of mind does not explain or justify, but rather stands in for a claim about the truth of materialism.
40 On the overgrasping power of thought, see Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, Chapter 4, "The Hegelian Middle: On the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*," especially 96–106. He writes, " 'Overreaching' is perhaps Hegel's most important term, and the presence of overreaching power in Spirit may be called without exaggeration the decisive condition of the possibility of the complete philosophic thought," (96).
41 *Enz.*, §24 A1.
42 PhS §73–89; PhG 57–68.
43 LHP 2: 138–139; Hegel, *Werke* 19: 154.
44 LHP 2: 137–153; Hegel, *Werke* 19: 151–168.
45 On Hegel's synthesis of Aristotle's "activity" with (early modern philosophy's) "subjectivity" see Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle*, especially 15–31 and "Hegel on Aristotle's *Energeia*," *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* 27, nos. 53/54 (2006): 69–80.
46 *Enz.*, §142 A.
47 *Enz.*, §50 R. Hegel's defense of this contention is the whole dialectical movement of the *Phenomenology* gathered together as Spirit's self-discovery (in which it is certain of itself as all reality).
48 For remarks on this in the context of distinguishing Hegel from Schelling, see Richard Kroner, introduction to G. W. F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 24.
49 *Enz.*, §11.

# 6 *Mens Divina* as *Lebendigkeit*

## Hegel's Interpretation of *Metaphysics* 1072b26–27

*Andy German*

### 1. Introduction

In *Metaphysics* Lambda, Aristotle describes God as a simple, unchanging being whose *ousia* (substance) is *energeia* (being-at-work) and who, himself unmoved, is the source of all motion.[1] In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel proceeds to import change, potentiality, and movement into the divine, thus transforming it into a precursor of Absolute Spirit. What are we to make, philosophically, of such an apparently egregious misreading?

The historical and philological details of Hegel's Aristotle interpretation are now widely known.[2] While few competent scholars would be willing to call his interpretation entirely legitimate, it is noteworthy that neither would most go so far as to call it a pure flight of fancy either. Hegel's study of classical thought was deep and assiduous, and his Greek was superb. Is this interpretation, then, merely a case of reading as rewriting? In other words, is Hegel reading Aristotle through his own philosophical commitments and fishing out the dialectical-speculative trout that he himself has planted in the river? This won't do either. Hegel was well aware that Aristotle was not yet able to express God as Absolute; he says so explicitly.[3] Furthermore, while Hegel found incipiencies of his own thinking in that of the Neo-Platonists and remarks that Neo-Platonism might as well be called "Neo-Aristotelianism," he could surely tell his Aristotle from his Plotinus.[4]

It is truer to the phenomena, I think, to say that while no great philosopher does justice to his teachers or predecessors, the cause of this is the comprehensive character of philosophy itself. Comprehensiveness need not mean systematicity in Hegel's sense of a completed account that develops from a single, dialectical operator. Hegel knows that Aristotle has no such system.[5] Perhaps, the relevant sense of comprehensiveness will become clearer through the following reflection: Whatever their differences, Aristotle and Hegel would be at one in denying Heraclitus's statement that, "The most beautiful cosmos is a heap poured out at random."[6] The world is precisely a *cosmos* because it is a whole. This is so not because it is all made of one thing, or yields its secrets to one conceptual method, but because it has an articulated structure that allows us to move from the fact that things are and appear to us, up along various chains of explanation, to the causes

responsible for their so being and appearing. In Aristotelian language, we can progress from *to hoti* (the "that") to *to dioti* (the "through what," or "why"). In knowing its ultimate principles, the wise man would possess the most comprehensively *satisfying* speech about this structure.[7] Beyond their deep and undeniable differences, Aristotle and Hegel share the commitment to seeking such satisfaction as well as the insight that one of its conditions is that thinking is the true *prius*; in Aristotle's terms, it is divine. It is only against this shared background that we can properly assess whether Hegel's reading of the *Metaphysics* is merely an "over-interpretation" of Aristotle's views, or perhaps a deepening of them.

Specifically, Hegel saw the philosophical nerve of Aristotle's account of divinity in the somewhat surprising claim that the unmoved mover is *alive* and has a way of life (a *diagōgē*).[8] This is surprising because during the discussion of the principles of *ousia*, God appears only as an *object* of thought (a *noēton*).[9] Only later do we discover that God is alive, and that his life is somehow like our own. Now, for Hegel the structure of life is contradiction. He therefore believes—with some justice, I think—that this must also be the case for Aristotle, the thinker whose greatest achievement was the conceptual breakthrough to *energeia*. Hegel views the attribution of life and thinking to the divine as evidence that the momentum of Aristotle's thinking was carrying him, despite himself, beyond fixed conceptions of identity, difference, and contradiction. While I am far from endorsing Hegel's entire exegesis, I will argue that reading Aristotle with Hegel does help—not to turn him into a Hegelian, certainly—but rather to elicit the full implications of the profound Aristotelian insight that "life is the being-at-work of intellect."[10]

## 2. Hegel's Reading of Aristotle

First, a classificatory question: with which part of Hegel's *Science of Logic* are we to identify Aristotle's philosophy, and specifically Aristotelian essence (*to ti ēn einai*)? Initially, the answer seems inescapable. When, in Book Two of the *Logic*, Hegel shows how essence, thought of as a fixed and stable unity, eventually dissolves itself, he is discussing the basically Aristotelian conception of essence as a fixed identity which is the owner of the essential properties, and thereby the cause of the intelligibility of the composite substance.[11] If thinking eventually transcends this conception and finds the origin of essential unity in its own activity, then it would seem that in the transition to the Subjective Logic we also transcend Aristotle.

And yet, in several places, Hegel remarks that Aristotle was not trapped in the fixed and inert categories of the Understanding. Hegel repeatedly says that, despite the limitations of his times, Aristotle attained a genuinely "speculative point of view" and grasped the whole of the universe in such a way that the "deepest speculative Concept emerges therefrom."[12] Aristotelian thought, as a whole, belongs to the Doctrine of the Concept (*Lehre vom Begriff*), then, not the Doctrine of Essence (*Lehre vom Wesen*).

The reasons behind Hegel's view have received expert treatment in Alfredo Ferrarin's study.[13] For Hegel, the primary achievement of Aristotle's philosophy is to rethink, from the ground up, how Platonic form functions as the cause of the determinacy of particulars. Plato, like Aristotle, understands form not only as a universal, but also as a final cause, the perfection of the particular (since all forms ultimately relate to the form of the Good). In Plato, however, the role of form as *telos* remains only implicit (*nur an sich*).[14] There is no satisfactory explanation of how form is *wirklich* (actual), how it is realized in the particular, because it lacks the "principle of vitality"—*Lebendigkeit*. Only with Aristotelian *energeia* does activity, realization—and thus negativity—become integral to answering Socrates's *ti estin* (what is X?) question. Only with Aristotle are we able to see *how* form actualizes. In *The Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel speaks of the "principle of vitality as the principle of subjectivity [*Prinzip der Subjektivität*]"[15] and says that this principle is *Aristoteles eigentümlich*, peculiarly Aristotle's.[16] What does he mean by this?

As Ferrarin shows, Hegel understood *energeia* as an activity of self-realization, which remains identical with itself through the sublating of otherness. It is a "self-relating negativity."[17] The mention of negativity here is crucial for Hegel. Aristotelian thought is essentially speculative because its account of how *telos* is present within development (say, the acorn developing toward the oak tree) requires both negation (since development involves change) and enduring self-sameness (of the *telos* at work in and through the process). For Hegel, *energeia* must be the activity of return-into-self through motion (*Bewegung*) and change (*Veränderung*). For this reason, he can say that "Actuality is concrete subjectivity" (*Energie ist konkreter Subjektivität*).[18]

It is this identification of *energeia* with subjectivity that leads directly to what seems to be Hegel's worst blunder: his transformation of the unmoved mover into a self-positing Absolute Spirit *ante litteram*. Hegel's errors in translation and interpretation of the Greek were already well-known to Schelling. For example, at 1072a24–25 Aristotle argues that the first circle of heaven, because it is simultaneously moved and a mover (of the subordinate spheres), is an intermediate. From this, Aristotle deduces that there must be something unmoved moving the first heaven. Hegel, by contrast, relying on the (since superseded) Erasmus edition of the *Metaphysics*, translates the text so that the "middle" (the first heaven) both moves and is unmoved. The result is that, for him, the first heaven *is* divine activity, the circular motion of Reason, actually instantiated in nature.[19] "God, as the living God is the Universe, and in the universe God, as living God, shows himself forth."[20]

It must be said that this particular misreading is not arbitrary, but of a piece with Hegel's entire understanding of what he calls the "highest point" of Aristotle's philosophy.[21] For example, after translating Aristotle's whole description of divine life up to line 1072b30, he summarizes it as follows:

"The Concept states: The true is the unity of subjectivity and objectivity, which is therefore neither the one nor the other but just as much the one *as* the other."[22] God is not a "dry identity," then, but rather "Activity, movement, repulsion . . . identical with itself in difference." As identity-within-difference, the divine *cannot* be an actuality separate from *dunamis* and motion.[23] Instead, it sublates them. From a motionless (*akinētos*), separate (*kechorismenē*), and self-related substance we arrive at a complex unity of potentiality with actuality, movement with completion. In Hegel's hands, the simplicity of divine being and thinking becomes a dialectical reconciliation of opposites. This divine identity-within-difference is *Tätigkeit*, a ceaseless activity communicated "below stairs," as it were, from God through the whole of being.[24] This is what Schelling mocked as Hegel's God who has no Sabbath.[25]

We seem to have sufficient evidence for a conviction, then. Hegel's interpretation results from his assumption that whatever is true in Aristotle must be expressible in terms of the Concept—"As philosophy now speaks" (*wie jetzt die Philosophie spricht*), as he puts it—even if Aristotle could not yet express himself that way.[26] I urge a stay of judgment, however. Hegel's interpretation, as we have seen, centers on the notion of *Lebendigkeit*, vitality. To grasp what this means for him we need to set out the link between three moments in Hegel's Logic: essence, contradiction, and life, since it is Hegel's understanding of life as a manifestation of contradiction that determines what he thought Aristotle meant by attributing *zōē* (life) to the divine. With this established, we can turn to the ancient *quaestio vexata* of what Aristotle might have meant by it. The two are not as far apart as they seem.

## 3. From Contradiction to Life

Hegel's Doctrine of Essence is a study in *ana-lysis*, in the original Greek sense of this word: that is, dissolution. What is undergoing dissolution here is the traditional philosophical conception of essence as a structure of properties whose unity constitutes the "what it is to be" of anything. This identification of "what it is to be" with being determinate is the common Socratic inheritance of Plato and Aristotle. Book Two shows, however, that the distinction between "essential and inessential being," or essential properties and accidental ones (as well as between essence and appearance) proves utterly insupportable. It collapses in on itself in the very effort of being expressed. But if the Doctrine of Essence is a dissolution of traditional essence, it is not a dissolution of intelligibility. Rather, it demonstrates that intelligible essence is a *process* of conceptual determination, dissolution, and re-assimilation at higher and richer levels up to the completed Absolute Idea. That is, essentiality for Hegel is not a fixed property of a finite "this" (*tode ti*), independent of everything else, for the simple reason that there is no such independence. Essentiality is a property of the whole. The essence of any finite being, any "part," is exactly its being a moment of the whole.

In the ordinary course, our speaking of something as having an essential nature implies that it is this particular thing here, not that one. That is, our intentional object must be identical to itself (it must hold still, as it were, so that we can identify it), but also different from everything else so that we could pick it out at all. In other words, we must articulate essence by means of two of the most basic elements of intelligibility: identity and difference. In our ordinary and (for Hegel) non-dialectical reasoning, we treat these as distinct, independently comprehensible elements that Hegel calls "determinations of reflection" (*Reflexionsbestimmungen*). In the chapter of the *Science of Logic* we are examining (Book Two, Chap. 2, § 1), Hegel shows how the attempt to think these determinations reveals them as internally contradictory. Contradiction is not the annihilation of determinacy; rather, it is uncovered as its true ground.[27]

Let us begin with identity, commonly called "the first law of thought."[28] External reflection conceives of identity as inert, "abstract" identity, lying alongside difference, and waiting for the loom of reason to come along and weave the two together.[29] Understood this way, identity is the foundation of traditional essence, because essence, of course, is always self-identical. However, if we try to think of identity as absolutely independent of difference we find that is empty. It says nothing and can ground nothing; it is a conceptual black hole. In order for the identity of anything to be distinguishable from other things, it must have attributes, but attributes are differences. Difference, therefore, is "the specifying determination," which makes identity available to reason at all.[30] If identity is nothing without difference, then it is other than what it was supposed to be (namely, a determinate something). Identity, as itself, is thus "self-referring, reflected difference."[31]

But what about difference? We have seen it show up as "the essential moment of identity itself," but how, conversely, is identity implicated in difference? Hegel writes: "Difference in itself is the difference that refers itself to itself; thus, it is the negativity of itself, the difference not from another but of itself from itself; it is not itself, but its other. What is other than difference, however, is identity."[32] Difference, finally, cannot be just "simple difference," i.e., difference without relation. To be what it *is*, it must be different-from-something. What is difference "as such" different from? Identity. One can see Hegel's point emerge even in the language I am using: difference "as such," difference "in itself," etc. In other words, the "identity" of difference is other-relation.

From the preceding reflections, it should be easy to see how we move to contradiction in Section C. In this section, instead of identity Hegel speaks of the "positive," and he speaks of the "negative" as difference—but the substance is the same.[33] Each determination of reflection is what it is over against its other: i.e., it "excludes its other" and its identity is constituted by this exclusion. However, identity is also completely unintelligible *without* its other, so that by excluding its other it is negating *itself*. Unhappily for the partisan of traditional logic, primitive logical elements really are radically contradictory.[34]

Contradiction is the ground of identity and difference because each such moment, in being what it is, is at the same time overreaching itself toward its opposite.[35] This is what Hegel means by his repeated remark that "each moment [identity and difference] is the whole self-contained opposition."[36] We are now prepared to understand his identification of contradiction as the "determined, primordial origin of all activity and self-movement,"[37] the "root of all movement and life."[38]

Let us consider a concrete example, looked at from the direction of essential identity, in order to see in it the whole conceptual movement we've worked through. In pointing to the essence of Socrates, we are pointing to those properties Socrates *must* have to be what he is, namely human. Essence must always be identical with itself. Its identity is expressed as A=A. But Hegel points out that A=A tells us exactly nothing unless we specify the values of the variable A; say, rational, mortal, or animal. Otherwise, he says, we are simply chewing our logical cud.[39] However, in order to specify values for the variable, the values we name must be distinct, and hence different from one another. If they weren't, we couldn't pick them out. Therefore, Socrates's essence as human simply cannot be identity without attributes. But attributes are determinations, each of which is different from the other. "Animal" and "rational" are not the same, though they are both integral to the essence of being-human. Hegel is arguing, then, that the connection between identity and difference is not external to, but ingredient in, essence having any intelligibility at all.[40]

For our purposes, there is a crucial point here. The structure of essence may be contradictory, but note that it is the *sine qua non* for Socrates's ability to take on further determinations such as "husband of Xanthippe," "teacher of Plato" and so on. Socrates must be human to do any of these things, and his being human—during that period in which he maintains this mode of being—is an identity of differences, *by virtue of which* he can take on further determinations while remaining himself. To be something identifiable is to have identity in the sense of "inner repelling."[41] And to be alive is the activity of contradiction, "this movement of transition."[42] Finite beings, like finite logical elements, "determine themselves as self-identical, yet in their self-identity they are rather the negative, a self-identity which is reference-to-other."[43]

## 4. Aristotle and Hegel: A Conceptual Abyss?

Given this analysis, however, a chasm seems to separate Hegel from Aristotle on the most basic principles, since even a cursory survey of *Metaphysics* Gamma (not to mention other texts) should suffice to establish that *to ti ēn einai* is not a dialectical concept.[44] It is the fixed cause of intelligibility, simple, undivided, determinate, and grasped all at once in the act of intellection (*noēsis*).[45] Accidental properties are properties of the composite substance, the *sunolon*, and thus external to the essence. It would appear that nowhere in Aristotle do we find an equivalent to Hegel's internalization of negativity and other-relation as ingredients of identity itself.

It is true that both thinkers share the conviction that non-contradiction is a principle of the determinacy of being, and only derivatively a principle governing speech.[46] Hence, in the *Metaphysics*, those who would violate it do not merely contradict themselves propositionally, they "do away with substance and with what it is to be something."[47] But, for Aristotle, this entails that the principle of non-contradiction excludes all relation to otherness, all conceptual motion. If this thing here is a human being, then there will be something that is its *to anthrōpōi einai* (being-human) and this something must be one and determinate.[48] The composite substance, Socrates, can then be affected and related to otherness in manifold ways, but these are *per accidens* not *per se*. The composite undergoes change and motion, not its essence.

In the *Lectures*, however, Hegel seems supremely unconcerned with the differences between essence and composite substance. Nor does he dwell on the (not entirely perspicuous) relationship of the *Metaphysics* to Aristotle's texts on scientific demonstration. He seems to consider *Metaphysics* Epsilon through Lambda as a speculative work in a class by itself, entirely transcending the *Organon*.[49] Since life is the structure of contradiction, the essential *energeia* of living things (the paradigmatic *ousiai*) must be a *kinēsis* (motion) involving the sublation of otherness.

The actual state of affairs in the *Metaphysics* is far more complex. Aristotle does say that *energeia* first appears to us as a motion or pertaining to motion most especially (*malista*).[50] But this is only a first approach to the problem. *Dunamis* and *energeia* are not restricted to those things spoken of *kata kinesin* (with respect to movement).[51] In fact, we inquire about the *dunameis* related to motion only in order to reach another kind of *dunamis* and another kind of *energeia*, distinct from motion and becoming.[52] And it is this latter kind, Aristotle says, that is most "useful" (*chrēsimōtatē*) for his whole account.[53] Here is the crucial passage for our purposes, from Theta, 6:

> And since, of the actions [*praxeōn*] that have a limit, none of them is itself a completed end [*telos*] but it is the sort of thing which approaches an end (such as losing weight; for the thing that is losing weight, when it is doing so, is in motion in that way, although that which it is in motion toward is not yet present in it)—this is not an action, or at any rate, not a complete one, for it is not a *telos*. But that in which the *telos* is present is an action [*praxis*]. So one is seeing and at the same time has seen, is understanding and has understood, is thinking and has thought . . . Of these actions, we should call one group motions [*kinēseis*], but the other being-at-work [*energeias*]. For every motion is incomplete [*atelēs*] . . . one cannot at the same time be both walking and have walked, nor building and have built, nor coming to be and having come to be. . . . But at the same moment one has seen and is seeing; these are the same, as are thinking and having thought.[54]

What Hegel seems to ignore, then, is this fundamental distinction between a motion directed toward a completion it lacks (the struggle for weight loss) and the fulfillment of a potency (active thinking as the fulfillment of our capacity to think). The former involves alteration, but the latter is complete at each moment it occurs; it does not follow upon or await any development. We do not need to "rev up" our thinking before we can actually think, for example. And thinking really is the crux here, as witnessed by an important example in *De Anima*, where Aristotle distinguishes different senses of being-acted-upon (*paschein*):

> being-acted-upon [*to paschein*] is not unambiguous [*haploun*] either; in one sense it is a destruction of something by its contrary, but in another it is rather the preservation [*sōteria*] of something potential [*dunamei ontos*] by something actual [*entelecheiai ontos*] . . . . For the one who has knowledge comes to be thinking, and this is not a becoming-other [*alloiousthai*] since it is a progress toward oneself, that is, into actuality [*eis auto gar hē epidosis kai eis entelecheian*].[55]

To move from the first actuality of having knowledge to the second actuality of thinking is a process of self-manifestation. This is not a case of becoming *das Andere seiner selbst*—the other of oneself—but of progressing into one's *entelecheia*.[56] It is simply the full presence, the full fruition, of what the potency *is*. And it must somehow be in *this* sense that the *ousia* of God is *energeia*, since the divine, as perfectly complete, "does not admit of being other than it is in any respect at all."[57] In the divine, any change could only mean change for the worse.[58] This, after all, is why the unmoved mover thinks itself and does not know the world. Ferrarin writes:

> The relation of God to the world is not a communication from principle to consequence. . . . God and Nature are *conceptually* unrelated, for the essence of the one and the other fall asunder. The one means nothing with respect to the inner constitution of the other. . . . We have an army ruled by a general who doesn't know his troops.[59]

The text of Lambda 9 certainly lends Ferrarin's conclusions an air of finality. But on closer examination, there is something deeply unsatisfactory about them. Hegel can help us see what it is.

Why, if the separation between God and nature is as definitive as it seems, did Aristotle not make do with describing God as the passive cause of motion that moves the world as the beloved moves the lover, i.e., as an object?[60] Nothing up to that point seemed to indicate that an unmoved mover needed to be anything more than a passive principle.[61] Yet, at 1072b14, Aristotle suddenly begins to speak of the "course of life," the *diagōgē*, of the divine, which is in some way the best of the same kind of life we can live for a time. After identifying this *diagōgē* with thinking, Aristotle makes the claim that

is at the heart of my study: "But life belongs to God too, for the being at work of intellect is life, and that being [i.e., God] is being-at-work."[62] We might say that all this was hinted at in his earlier designation, in Lambda 6, of the prime mover as pure *energeia*.[63] But even if true, to paraphrase Diotima, the answer only calls forth new, more detailed questions. Why is life the activity of *intellect*, specifically? And how does this activity mediate between divine life and our life? Does the *energeia nou* mediate only between the divine and our rationality or does it establish some connection between divinity and animality as well?

Let's start with a clearer delineation of the *energeia* of *nous* (intellection). Like *aisthēsis* (perception), *nous* is a receptive potency that can separate form from material.[64] It shares this with two other psychic activities common to all living things: nutrition and reproduction.[65] In nutrition, the material of food is assimilated, without its form, into the being of the animal. In reproduction, the form of one material singular (the parent) is transferred to a different material singular (the child).[66] Succinctly stated, life at its most basic is a power of *discrimination* in other words, the discrimination between, or the separation of, form and material. In animals, this capacity rises to a still higher level: *aisthēsis* can take on the perceptible form of the object without its matter, and it can do this repeatedly, without losing its own determinate identity. It is this latter ability that especially characterizes *nous* as well, which can become any intelligible object once it thinks it.[67]

I mentioned just now the "determinate identity" of the sensitive or intellectual power. What is this, exactly? We can begin working toward an answer by reflecting on an interesting question raised by Aristotle in *De Anima*. If sensation is a being-affected by perceptible form,[68] why is it that air, for example, which is also acted on by something perceptible—a scent—does not itself smell that scent? This might seem like yet another scholastic pinhead awaiting its angels, but, in fact, Aristotle is asking a profound question: "What is smelling, over and above the being-affected by something" (*to paschein ti*)?[69] In trying to answer this question, Aryeh Kosman puts the point excellently well: when the perceptible form, the scent, is present in the air, the air becomes *sensible* but it does not thereby become *sensitive*.[70] What is the difference (given that in both cases we are dealing with a receptivity)? In the case of air, there is only the being-affected (the form is present *in* the air). In perception, the form is present *to* the animal. In other words, this "being present," in the case of the animal, is at the same time the relation of the animal's power of perception to the form. The form is present to the animal only because the animal's receptivity, unlike the air, is also *activity*.[71] I will try to elaborate this activity by turning to *nous*.

*Nous*, like the air, is entirely open to intelligible form. That is why it must be unmixed and without attributes so that it can be a perfect receptivity, a "place" of forms.[72] But this *topos* is not an abstract, Newtonian space. *Nous* is also a grasping—like a "hand," Aristotle says later.[73] Are his metaphors hopelessly mixed? Only if we assume that thinking is something simple. It

is not simple, however; nor is it only a being-affected. Thinking and perception are *appropriations* of form by some determinate thing so constituted that it is always directed at, holding itself open to, and reaching out toward objects. Taking the example of air and smell further, Kosman says that air cannot be sensitive, because, of course, it *is not conscious*.[74] That is, it is not capable of the kind of active receptivity that characterizes certain living beings (and, for Aristotle, not only human beings).[75] A *zōon* (animal) is not only affected, but also aware of being-affected. This conscious awareness is a kind of relation to the world both centered on the living being (which can direct its perceptive powers this way and that) and yet entirely transparent to its intentional objects (and hence different from reflective, thematic self-consciousness). *Nous* is also a world-relation of this kind. But what about *nous* and *zōe* when they are attributed to God?[76]

In his critique of Hegel, Ferrarin emphasizes that divine thought is characterized most of all by being related only to itself.[77] Furthermore, as this thinking is always active, it has no *dunamis* to progress from. And, since it thinks only itself, it does not involve any transition into otherness in order to return to itself. The pure activity of divine awareness simply abides; it is altogether without dialectical complexity. Has Hegel been decisively refuted, then? Not so fast.

In that famous passage of Lambda 9, on God and *noēsis noēseōs* (thought thinking itself), Aristotle begins with a general statement: *nous*, he says, "is the most divine of all things manifest to us."[78] It is crucial to note that this refers to all *nous*, not only divine *nous*. That is, thinking is not divine because God thinks, but rather God thinks because *thinking as such is the most divine energeia*. So, whether God thinks only itself or whether perhaps this was not Aristotle's last word on the matter (as some have argued),[79] it is clear that if thought is indeed divine, what is divine about it must be proper to the activity of thinking as such, whatever its object happens to be.[80]

Now, let us focus more closely on the activity proper to thinking by returning to our passage from *De Anima* 417b2–7. In going from the potency for knowledge to the actual exercise of knowledge, the knower does not become something different but rather becomes most himself. In the words of the old Army recruiting slogan, he is being "all that he can be." There is no *alloiōsis* (qualitative change), no *Veränderung* here; this much is true. But now that he *is* all that he can be, what is he doing? He is contemplating, and as we have just seen, that means he is actualizing that power whose very identity is its ability to assimilate the form of any known object. That is, this *entelecheia* just is a power to become other while remaining itself.[81] So too is perception and, more generally, life. A corpse can stand in the relation of "being-next-to" any other object, but this, in Hegelian terms, is a wholly external relation. A living organism, by contrast, is never merely next to, but always itself actively related to objects in diverse ways. That is, "being able to be determinately oneself through otherness" is not something that contingently happens to the animal sometimes. Rather, it *just is* life, no matter

what the animal is doing at any given time.[82] It could be asleep right now, for all we care. Nevertheless, sleep is not death, only its younger brother.

Similarly, even if the transition from the first to the second actuality of *theorein* is a progress into one's actuality (an *epidosis eis entelecheian*) and not a becoming-other (an *alloiōsis*), this does not change the fact that the *entelecheia* of thinking, as "being determinately itself through otherness," is an identity of identity and difference, a self-reference through negativity. Each of its two moments—self-relation and relation to otherness—when taken by itself, is finite. Each is determined against, or "excludes" the other. In so excluding, however, it negates an ingredient of its own determinacy. To put it again in the terms of the Doctrine of Essence: life, consciousness, and intellection, each of these is itself and the whole opposition. Each of these is therefore a structure of contradiction.[83] Now, if life is the *energeia* of *nous*, and God is living, noetic *energeia*, then God shares in the dialectical motion of contradiction, regardless of how we decide the great question of whether divine *noēsis* thinks anything but itself.

## 5. Conclusion

No one can deny that Hegel's interpretation radicalizes Aristotle. Ferrarin, for example, demonstrates how Hegel transforms *nous* into a kind of efficient causality, externalizing itself in nature and Spirit. Aristotle's claim that *nous* is somehow all beings when it thinks them becomes, in Hegel, the claim that *nous*, as passive, is the totality of all intelligible things (i.e., the "thinkability" of the world). As active, *nous* is the thinking of that thinkability.[84] Thus, *psuchē* is the negative activity that pervades all finite beings and returns into itself from them. When this process is completed in an act of *total* comprehension, we have the Absolute. This certainly gives Hegel's interpretation a totalizing impetus alien to Aristotle.

Is it entirely alien, however? In fact, we can say only that it is by ignoring the implications of Aristotle's penultimate statement in Lambda: "beings do not present the aspect of being badly governed" (*ta de onta ou bouletai politeuesthai kakos*).[85] Stated otherwise, the world is a *cosmos*, not a heap. While the deathless, completely satisfied perfection of the divine *diagōge* is not infinitely repeatable at lower levels, the conceptual structure of divinity is so repeatable. In fact, it *is* repeated—in the *energeia* of living beings.[86] In articulating this most fully, Hegel also reveals most fully why, for Aristotle, animals are "substances most of all" (*ousiai hai malistai*).[87] And this, finally, is the key to understanding the kind of unity we ought to expect from the *Metaphysics*—from the inquiry into being as being. Aristotle says that the divine unifies the entire inquiry, because as *archē* of the being of natural things, the knowledge of it "is universal . . . because first."[88] It is first, however, because it is most paradigmatically *alive*. Hegel's reading may very well be a radicalization of this whole movement of thought, but if so, we should remember that it was Aristotle who had already taken the first, and truly decisive, step.

For this reason, it is insufficient to claim that Hegel interprets Aristotle in light of what is yet to come, say, in Neo-Platonism. In a deeper sense, Hegel is actually interpreting Aristotle *backward*, in light of the originating principle of Greek philosophy. We can see this principle expressed by the goddess who greets Parmenides with good cheer, telling him not to fear since it is only just and right that he learn the "unmoved heart of well-rounded truth."[89] It is also at work in Plato's *Phaedrus*, when Socrates says that all souls who are willing and able may follow the gods to see the sights upon the roof of heaven.[90] In the *Lectures*, this principle appears in Hegel's translation of a line, from the second chapter of *Metaphysics* Alpha, in which Aristotle denies that knowledge of first things belongs to the gods alone: "but it is impossible for the divine to be jealous" (*all' oute to theoin phthoneron endechetai einai*).[91]

## Notes

1 *Metaphysics* Lambda 6, 1071b20, 1072b7. All further references to the *Metaphysics* shall be to the Bekker pagination in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924). Translations from Greek are my own, though for some terms I have preferred Joe Sachs's literal and non-Latinate renderings, which are useful for studying Hegel and Aristotle alongside one another. Accordingly, *energeia*, for example, is translated "being-at-work," rather than actuality. Purely for the sake of convenience, however, I use the standard translations of *ousia* as "substance" and *to ti ēn einai* as "essence," despite my conviction that these are decidedly inferior to Sachs's more concrete "thinghood" and "the what it-is-for-something-to-be," respectively.

2 The definitive, full-length study of Hegel and Aristotle is Alfredo Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). For a forcefully argued "qualified defense" of Hegel's reading of *De Anima*, against some of Ferrarin's criticisms, see Allegra de Laurentiis, "Hegel's Interpretation of Aristotle's Psyche: A Qualified Defense," in *Hegel: New Directions*, ed. Katerina DelGiorgi (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2006): 227–254. See also Pierre Aubenque, "Hegel et Aristote," in *Hegel et la pensée grecque*, ed. J. D'Hondt (Paris: P.U.F., 1972), 97–120 and Werner Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus* (Frankfurt a.M., Klostermann, 2004).

3 See G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (henceforth *Werke*), eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), Vols. 18–20, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 19: 151, where Hegel remarks that in Aristotle, God still appears as one particular alongside the others. Compare *Werke* 19: 413.

4 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 144. For example, it is only in Plotinus that *noēsis noēseōs* receives a satisfactory description because Plotinus understands that the thought object is not external to *nous*. In thinking the *noēton, nous* is thinking only itself. (*Werke* 19: 450–451 and 463).

5 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 145: "Ein System der Philosophie haben wir nicht im Aristoteles zu suchen."

6 Heraclitus Fragment 124: *all' hōsper sarma eikē kechumenōn ho kallistos kosmos*.

7 *Metaphysics* Alpha 1, 981a28–981a29 and 2, 982b10–982b30.

8 The attribution of life to the divine is made at Lambda 7, 1072b26.

9 *Metaphysics* Lambda 7, 1072a26.
10 *Metaphysics* Lambda, 7, 1072b26–1072b27. Compare with *Eudemian Ethics* 1245a9–1245a10, where we are told that we desire to live because we desire to know (*hōste dia touto kai zēn aei bouletai, hoti bouletai aei gnorizein*). And compare, Klaus Oehler, "Aristotle on Self-Knowledge," in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 118, 6 (Dec. 1974): 505, on Aristotle's assumption that life as such implies self-awareness and self-knowledge.
11 See *Werke* 5 (*Wissenschaft der Logik* I): 61: "The objective logic thus takes the place rather of the former metaphysics, which was *supposed* to be the scientific edifice of the world as constructed by thoughts alone." See G.W.F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic* (henceforth SL), translated and edited by George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 42.
12 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 146. See also 147: "der Begriff daraus hervorgeht, der spekulative Begriff, die einfache Bestimmung—dies ist es, wo Aristoteles eigentlich philosophisch wird und zugleich darin höchst spekulativ." On how genuine speculation can nevertheless coincide with finite thinking see Brady Bowman, *Hegel and the Metaphysics of Absolute Negativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 82: "untrammeled, directly realistic thought about the world, including reflection on the unconditioned, can fulfill all the criteria of speculative philosophy *prior to and independently of any critique of reason . . . without necessarily abandoning the medium of "finite" thought-determinations*."
13 For an especially good summary of his entire analysis, see Ferrarin, 189–197.
14 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 152.
15 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 153.
16 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 153.
17 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 153. Compare *Werke* 19: 154: "die sich auf sich beziehende Negativität."
18 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 154.
19 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 161: "den Kreis der in sich zurückkehrenden Vernunft."
20 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 164.
21 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 158. Compare *Werke* 19: 162. See also Klaus Düsing, *Hegel und die Geschichte der Philosophie: Ontologie und Dialektik in Antike und Neuzeit* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), 126.
22 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 163.
23 Hegel, *Werke* 10 (*Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften* III), 164–165.
24 Hegel views the "self-position of the first substance" as a kind of "exemplary act, indefinitely repeatable at inferior levels." See Aubenque, 106. Compare, for example, with *Werke* 10: 18 (*Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* Vol. 3, *Die Philosophie des Geistes* § 381 A), "Even external nature, like spirit, is rational, divine, a representation of the Idea" (*Auch die äussere Natur, wie der Geist, ist vernünftig, göttlich, eine Darstellung der Idee*).
25 Quoted in Ferrarin, 16. See F.W.J. Schelling, *Schellings Werke*, ed. Manfred Schröter, Vol. 5 *Münchener Vorlesungen* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1965), 230; and *Philosophische Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie* (*Schellings Werke* 5: 641).
26 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 164. Indeed, this assumption grounds much of Hegel's most effusive praise of Aristotelian thought, in the *Lectures* and elsewhere. Compare *Werke* 19: 158 on Aristotle's God as an unsurpassed example of "Idealism." And compare Werke 8 (*Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* I): 339 (§ 187): "Even if, in his own way, Aristotle contributes much that is essentially a product of description and of the understanding, the *speculative* concept is always what is dominant with him." See Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, trans. T. F. Geraets et al. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 263.

27 Hegel, *Werke* (*Wissenschaft der Logik* II), 6: 38; SL 355–356: "the determinations of reflection are in fact *determinate against* one another . . . identity, diversity and opposition . . . are not therefore exempt from transition and contradiction. Therefore, on closer examination, the several propositions that are set up as *absolute laws of thought* . . . contradict each other and mutually sublate each other."
28 Hegel, *Werke* 6: 41; SL 357. As always in Hegel, when discussing identity, for example, we are not discussing mere formal thought structures. We are discussing essence as a mode of *being* which has a purported "self-identity," *Werke* 6: 39; SL 356. For Hegel it is sheer nonsense to call identity, difference and non-contradiction "laws of thought" without "ontological commitments."
29 This is Hegel's own striking image at *Werke* 6: 39; SL 357.
30 Hegel, *Werke* 6: 36; SL 354.
31 Hegel, *Werke* 6: 40; SL 357. Compare Stanley Rosen, *The Idea of Hegel's Science of Logic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 278: "identity depends on difference in order to be what it is. Where there is no difference, identity or the identical must play both roles."
32 Hegel, *Werke* 6: 46; SL 361.
33 Hegel, *Werke* 6: 64; SL 374.
34 Hegel, *Werke* 6: 65; SL 374: "Since the self-subsisting determination of reflection excludes the other *in the same respect* as it contains it and is self-subsisting for precisely this reason, in its self-subsistence the determination excludes its own self-subsistence from itself." My emphasis here is meant to show how, for Hegel, even the basic elements of intelligibility—to say nothing of complex structures like natural beings—violate those qualifiers ("in the same respect," "at the same time") which Aristotle calls the *bebaiotatē tōn archon,* "the most stable principle" of being and thinking (*Metaphysics* Gamma, 3, 1005b20–1005b23).
35 This is also what Hegel is doing in the discussion of likeness and unlikeness at Hegel, *Werke* 6: 50–51; SL 364.
36 Hegel, *Werke* 6: 64; SL 374; and *Werke* 6: 47; SL 362.
37 Hegel, *Werke* 6: 47; SL 362.
38 Hegel, *Werke* 6: 75; SL 382: "It is only insofar as something has a contradiction within it that it moves, is possessed of instinct and activity." Life is treated thematically, not in the Doctrine of Essence, but near the end of the Subjective Logic, since it is the immediate unity of subjectivity and objectivity; that is, the immediate manifestation of the Idea. See *Werke* 6: 479–484; SL 683–686.
39 Hegel, *Werke* 6: 41; SL 359.
40 "Thought that keeps to external reflection and knows of no other thought except that of external reflection does not attain to identity as we have just grasped it, nor does it recognize essence. . . . Such a thought will always have only abstract identity in mind, and outside and alongside it, difference." Hegel, *Werke* 6: 39; SL 356–357. And compare *Werke* 6: 41; SL 358: "to be different belongs to identity not externally, but within it, in its nature."
41 Hegel, *Werke* 6: 40; SL 357.
42 Hegel, *Werke* 6: 40; SL 357.
43 Hegel, *Werke* 6: 67; SL 376.
44 Ferrarin, 192: "Aristotelian essences are fixed and stable causes of being and intelligibility for each of the beings they define. The dialectical self-motion of thought-determinations, the negativity that Hegel finds in the *nous* and the relation to otherness . . . in essences, seem almost entirely absent."
45 *Metaphysics* Theta, 10, 1051b22–1051b32 and *De Anima* Book Three, 6, 430b26–430b30. Compare *Nicomachean Ethics,* Book Six, 8, 1142a25–1142a26.
46 Hegel, *Werke* 6: 74; SL 381: "dieser Satz (d.h. der Widerspruch) . . . vielmehr die Wahrheit und das Wesen *der Dinge* ausdrücke" (my emphasis). Compare

*Werke* 19: 239: the law of contradiction, taken in isolation, has "no truth" (*keine Wahrheit*).

47 *Metaphysics* Gamma, 4, 1007a20–1007a21: *anairousin ousian kai to ti ēn einai*.

48 Because without this strict distinction all things would be *per accidens*, and there would be neither *ousia* nor *logos*. See *Metaphysics* Gamma, 4, 1007a28–1007a32.

49 The *Organon*, for Hegel, was a "natural history" of finite thinking (*Werke* 19: 229), but Aristotle himself altogether transcended the categories of such finitude (*Werke* 19: 241).

50 *Metaphysics* Theta, 6, 1047a31–1047a32: *dokei gar hē energeia malista hē kinēsis einai*.

51 *Metaphysics* Theta, 6, 1046a2–1046a3.

52 *Metaphysics* Theta, 6, 1048a30.

53 *Metaphysics* Theta, 5, 1045b36.

54 *Metaphysics* Theta, 6, 1048b18–1048b134.

55 *De Anima* Book Two, 5, 417b2–417b7.

56 Dieter Henrich, *Selbstverhältnisse* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1982), 160: "The finite as such is the other of itself."

57 *Metaphysics* Lambda, 7, 1072b7–1072b8: *touto ouk endechetai allōs echein oudamos*.

58 *Metaphysics* Lambda, 9, 1074b25–1074b27: *. . . kai ou mataballei, eis cheiron gar hē metabolē*.

59 Ferrarin, 375–376.

60 *Metaphysics*, Lambda, 7, 1072b3.

61 On this point, see the painstaking study of Lambda 7 in André Laks, "Metaphysics Λ 7," in *Symposium Aristotelicum*, ed. Michael Frede and David Charles (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 2000), 232.

62 *Metaphysics*, Lambda, 7, 1072b26–1072b27: *Kai de ge zōē huparchei, hē gar nou energeia zōē, ekeinos de hē energeia*. A brief philological note: In his translation of *kai zōē de ge huparchei* at 1072b26, Laks takes *huparchei* as absolute (as indeed it is without a dative following it) rendering the line not merely, "But [life] belongs to it too," but rather "But God *is* life." Though not the standard rendering, it has much to recommend it. On Laks's reading, the identification of God with life is the thesis. Aristotle argues for it in what follows by identifying the *energeia nou* with life, and then God with the *energeia nou*.

63 At *Metaphysics* Lambda, 6, 1071b20.

64 *De Anima* Book Three, 4, 429a14–429a16 and 430a7–430a9.

65 The nutritive soul is the *prōtē kai koinotatē dunamis*—the first and most common power of the soul—by which life is present in all living things (*kath' hēn huparchei to zēn hapasin*). *De Anima* Book Two, 4, 415a20–415a25. Not for nothing, then, is there a striking similarity here between Aristotle and Hegel, who also notes the close connection between thinking and eating. See Hegel, *Werke* 8: 57.

66 *De Anima* Book Two, 4, 415a28.

67 *De Anima* Book Three, 4, 429b30–429b31: "the intellect is in a certain way the intelligible things in potency, but is actively none of them until it thinks them."

68 *De Anima* Book Two, 12, 424a17–424a19: *Hē men aisthēsis esti to dektikon tōn aisthētōn eidōn aneu tēs hulēs*.

69 *De Anima* Book Two, 12, 424b16–424b17. For our purposes, we could rephrase this as: what is *perceiving* more generally, over and above being-affected?

70 Aryeh Kosman, "What Does the Maker Mind Make?" in *Essays on Aristotle's De Anima* eds. Martha C. Nussbaum and Amelie O. Rorty (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1992), 355.

71 Hegel's description at *Werke* 6: 478 (682) makes unusually clear the communion of receptivity and activity in sensation: "Sensibility may therefore be regarded as the external existence of the internal soul, for it takes in (*in sich aufnimmt*) all

externality but reduces it (*zurückführt*) to the complete simplicity of self-equal universality."

72 *De Anima* Book Three, 4, 429a18–429a21 and a27–a28.
73 *De Anima* Book Three, 8, 432a1–432a2.
74 Kosman, "Maker Mind", 355.
75 *Nota Bene:* In speaking of conscious awareness, I am not speaking of *self*-consciousness, the reflexive turning to oneself, in which noticing-of-self becomes thematic. As Kosman notes, when Aristotle speaks, for example of "perceiving that we see and hear" (*aisthanometha hoti horōmen kai akouomen*), at *De Anima* Book Three, 2, 425b12, he is not speaking of an act of turning oneself into an object of consciousness. He is speaking of something of which animals are likewise capable: that self-awareness characteristic of living beings that know what they are doing as they direct their perceptual powers, not onto themselves, but onto the world. Human theoretical cognition is a higher order capacity of this kind.
76 Like God, *nous poiētikos*, too, is an *ousia* that *is energeia*. Cf. *De Anima* Book Three, 5, 430a18 with *Metaphysics* Lambda, 6, 1071b20.
77 *Metaphysics* Lambda, 9, 1074b33–1074b34.
78 *Metaphysics* Lambda, 9, 1074b16: *tōn phainomenōn theiotaton*.
79 See the very interesting speculations on this score in Jacques Brunschwig, "*Metaphysics* Λ, 9: A Short Lived Thought Experiment?" in *Aristotle's Metaphysics Lambda*, ed. Frede, esp. 304–306.
80 *Metaphysics* Lambda, 9, 1074b21: *dia gar tou noein to timion autōi huparchei*. And cf. 1072b23. This point is very convincingly carried by Kosman, in his article "*Metaphysics Λ, 9*: Divine Thought," Frede, ed., *Aristotle's Metaphysics Lambda*, 316–317.
81 Kosman, "Maker Mind," 357: "The activity of knowing is precisely this act of becoming determined by the object of knowledge while remaining oneself and *nous* is the psychic power so to be determined without relinquishing determinate identity."
82 Richard Dien Winfield, *Hegel's Science of Logic: A Critical Rethinking in Thirty Lectures* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012), 306: "Insofar as the living thing has an individual objectivity, *it cannot help* but be in relationship to other objects, be they living or not" [my emphasis]. Winfield's point is strengthened in his subsequent remarks on metabolism as a complex of activities which, taken as a whole, sustain the constant and active *resistance* by the living thing to the merely external determination (by mechanism and chemism) which operates on non-living things. So long as we live, we are busy maintaining ourselves *over against* external nature. See *Werke* 6: 476; SL 680.
83 Near the end of the Subjective Logic, Hegel remarks that for reflection, the "omnipresence of the simple in the manifold externality," which, as we have seen, characterizes organic life and cognition, must remain an "incomprehensible mystery [*Geheimnis*]." *Werke* 6: 472; SL 678.
84 Ferrarin, 313.
85 *Metaphysics* Lambda, 10, 1076a3–1076a4.
86 See Jonathan Lear, *The Desire to Understand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 301: "God's activity is unmoved, unaffected, and separated from perceptible things: nevertheless, his eternal activity is a higher level actuality whose corresponding lower level may yet be found in enmattered essences."
87 *Metaphysics* Zeta, 8, 1034a4. And compare Zeta, 7, 1032a19. I agree, then, with De Laurentiis: "Despite Hegel's idiosyncratic formulations and his occasionally questionable translations of Greek texts, I find that his interpretations of fundamental principles of Greek philosophy sheds light precisely on the meaning and rigour of texts that others feel compelled to view as inauthentic, of questionable attribution, or simply as hopelessly controversial." De Laurentiis, 230.

88 *Metaphysics* Epsilon, 1, 1026a29–1026a30: *katholou houtōs hoti protē*.
89 Parmenides *Fragments* 1: 26–29.
90 The reason is that "jealousy [*phthonos*] stands outside of the divine chorus." *Phaedrus* 247a6–247a7.
91 Metaphysics Alpha, 2, 983a2–983a3. Hegel, *Werke* 19: 150: "Aber das Göttliche kann nicht neidisch sein." Hegel adds after this, "d.h. das, was es ist, nicht mitteilen, nicht gemeinschaftlich haben wollen (wie Licht durch Anzünden, opfert es sich nicht auf)." Compare a similar passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Book Ten, 7, 1177b26–1177b35.

# 7 The Way Past the Stripping Argument in Hegel and Aristotle

*Joshua Mendelsohn*

## 1. Introduction

In the preface to the first edition of the *Science of Logic*, Hegel introduces his project by discussing the displacement of traditional metaphysics, claiming that his logical science "makes up metaphysics proper [*eigentliche Metaphysik*]."[1] Later we are told that its first part, the objective logic, "takes the place . . . of the former metaphysics [*vormaligen Metaphysik*]."[2] In his preface to the second edition, Hegel praises Plato, "and Aristotle especially" for having "liberated [*befreit*]"[3] the forms of thought from their instrumental role in fulfilling human needs, and having begun to investigate them for their own sake.

Despite these prominent references to Aristotle and traditional metaphysics, there have been few studies devoted to exploring whether substantive connections exist between Hegel's *Science of Logic* and Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Klaus Hartmann is dismissive of any such connection,[4] and those who do explore Hegel's reading of Aristotle in depth tend to focus on his interpretation of *De Anima*.[5] In this paper, I want to suggest that there are non-trivial parallels between Hegel's *eigentliche Metaphysik* and the fourteen books attributed to Aristotle that established metaphysics as a topic.

Due to the scope of this paper, I will be able to provide only a sketch of what I take to be some fruitful comparisons. I will argue that Hegel and Aristotle both rely on a version of the so-called stripping argument in order to raise problems for a certain conception of determinacy. Aristotle's theory of predication in the *Categories*, I will argue, represents an attempt to solve these problems. Hegel criticizes the type of solution that the *Categories* offers in ways that point in the direction of Aristotle's later view expressed in *Metaphysics* Zeta 6.

## 2. Determinacy and the Limits of the Logic of Being

At the beginning of the first book of his *Science of Logic*, the Doctrine of Being, Hegel famously presents being as "pure indeterminacy and emptiness [*reine Unbestimmtheit und Leere*]."[6] In thinking pure being without any further qualification, Hegel claims that we think nothing determinate, and

so nothing at all. Nonetheless, some measure of determinacy is supposed to be awarded to the concept of being by thinking through its very indeterminacy. Having seen that pure being is an empty concept, we no longer simply *fail to think anything* in thinking being, but instead *recognize* our failure to have any thought. As such, we move from thinking nothing in the sense of having no thought, to thinking nothing in the sense of having a thought whose content is the concept "nothing." Our thought of being thereby gains some determinacy, if only a little, for now we are at least thinking some thought, even if the content of that thought is "nothing." Hegel purports to extend this procedure of determination to derive ever more determinate concepts such as number, measure, and infinity by self-consciously thinking being and the concepts that this thinking gives rise to.

This process is carried through until Hegel reaches the concept of a "real measure:" the idea of a system of related quantifiable attributes inhering in space and time.[7] At this point, however, Hegel indicates that the process of attaining successively more determinate thoughts from reflection on being has reached an impasse. Under the heading of "Absolute Indifference," he writes:

> Being is abstract indifference, for which, since it is supposed to be thought in its own right as being, the abstract expression "*indifference*" has been used—in which there is not supposed to be as yet any kind of determinateness. Pure quantity is this indifference in the sense of being capable of taking on any determination, but in such a way that these are external to it and that quantity itself does not have any link with them originating in it.[8]

Hegel here acknowledges that the hard-won concept of a physical quantity is still no concept of a determinate particular. The idea of a quantity, Hegel explains, is simply the idea of something being able to receive any determination on a scale. To say that a teacup has a quantitative attribute such as a specific *diameter* is to conceptualize it as possibly having any diameter at all: to think of it as occupying a particular place on the scale of all possible diameters. This way of thinking of the teacup's diameter makes its diameter "external" to the teacup itself in the sense that we must, for the purposes of placing it on a scale of possible diameters, think of the teacup in abstraction from the diameter it actually has. We thus conceive of the teacup as a determinable capable of being determined by any possible diameter.

Hegel continues: "Determinateness is in it still only as a circumstance, that is, something *qualitative* and *external* which has indifference as a *substrate*. But what has in this way been determined as qualitative and external is only a vanishing thing."[9] Hegel's point is that if *all* features of objects are thought of as qualitative or quantitative determinations, then the teacup itself all but vanishes, for the following reason. Take anything that determines or distinguishes the teacup (its diameter, its size, its color, etc.). By hypothesis,

we think of this determination as a position or point occupied by the teacup on a particular scale or in some space of possible determinations. In order to do this, we must think of the teacup that occupies this location on the scale as determined by features *other* than the one in question. Consequently, in order to think of *all* of the features of the teacup as determinations of measure, we must abstract from *every* remaining property of the teacup in the same way. When we do this, we find ourselves left with the thought of a bare substrate. In place of the teacup, we think of a generic bearer of properties that must be determined by something else. But if *all* features of *all* objects are thought of in the same way, then the same argument can be run on the saucer, the spoon, or anything. In this way, we come to think of the world as made up of indeterminate substrata occupying positions on various scales. But, then, what is left to determine that the teacup has the diameter it has, or even to individuate it? Nothing can, because everything—just like the teacup—is thought of as determined by something else.

At this point, it becomes evident that if we think of all the properties of a thing on the model of qualitative or quantitative determination, we fail to account for the determinacy of any particular. What we thought was progress in determining the content of our thought turns out to have just been passing the buck: everything needs to be thought of as determined by something else. The objection is not that this itself is incoherent: reciprocal determination of all properties by one other, for instance, is not ruled out, and Hegel will eventually consider this possibility.[10] Rather, this argument shows that the concept of a determinate particular is not reducible to the concepts of qualitative and quantitative determination. Qualitative and quantitative determination needs to be placed into a broader framework that affords us a concept by which to understand the subjects of such determination.

## 3. Determinacy and Matter

It is useful to compare this to an early argument in Book Zeta of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.[11] In his first venture to "say in outline what substance is,"[12] Aristotle offers four preliminary glosses on the notion of substance: "(a) what being is for that thing, (b) its universal, (c) its genus, and fourthly (d) what underlies [*to hupokeimenon*]."[13] He then proceeds to offer what has come to be known as the "stripping argument." The argument concerns substance in the fourth sense of "what underlies," which Aristotle glosses as "that of which other things are predicated while it itself is predicated of nothing further."[14] Aristotle writes:

> If matter is not substance, it is hard to see what else could be; for when all else is taken off, nothing apparent remains. For while other things are attributes, products, and capacities of bodies, length, breadth, and depth are quantities and not substances (for quantity is not substance). Rather, the substance is that primary thing to which these quantities

> belong. And yet when length, breadth, and depth are taken away, we see nothing remaining unless there be something which is determined by these. So on this view it must appear that matter alone is substance.[15]

Shortly thereafter, Aristotle disavows the conclusion that matter is substance, for which reason commentators take this argument to be a *reductio* against the characterization of substance as "what underlies."[16]

Overtly, the structure of Aristotle's argument differs from Hegel's. Hegel starts from the nature of quantitative determination and argues that such determination taken across the board forces us to think of indeterminate substrata in place of concrete particulars. Aristotle, by reflecting on the requirement that substance be what underlies all else, observes that this characterization of substance equates it with matter. However, closer examination reveals some important similarities.

First, the conception of substance characterized solely as a *hupokeimenon* shares the key property of objects given by pure quantitative determination that Hegel's argument turns on. It was essential to Hegel's argument that we think of the thing determined, on the one hand, and the qualities and quantities that determine it, on the other, as having asymmetric ontological roles. The teacup *sits somewhere* on a scale of possible radii (or diameters, heights, etc.), while the quantitative properties that determine it are understood on the model of locations that the teacup can occupy. As such we establish an asymmetry between the teacup itself—which is treated *merely* as a subject of predication—and its properties, which are not treated as possible subjects but only as things that could be said about something else. This is also how Aristotle glosses substance in the sense of *hupokeimenon*: "that of which other things are predicated while it itself is predicated of nothing further."[17] Like Aristotle, then, Hegel considers the consequences of thinking of objects as having only the possibility of being determined but not themselves determining what properties they have.

What was objectionable about this way of thinking for Hegel was not that all things were reduced to *substrata*, but that it made them *indifferent substrata*, substrata that have no intrinsic reason for being determined in one way and not another. Put this way, the upshot of Hegel's argument is that if nothing contains the ground of its own determination, then an account of external determination does not, in the absence of further explanation, give us any grip on determinacy. From this perspective, Aristotle's reasons for rejecting the conclusion that "matter alone is substance" are akin to Hegel's reason for taking the determinacy given by thinking through being to be limited. Immediately after his *reductio* argument, Aristotle gives the following gloss on "matter": "By matter I mean what is not said to be in its own right any thing, or a quantity [*hē kath' hautēn mēte ti mēte poson*], or anything else by which being is determined [*hōristai to on*]."[18] This helps explain why Aristotle takes it to be "impossible" for substance to be matter.[19]

What makes the conclusion objectionable for Aristotle, as for Hegel, is that matter lacks determinacy. We can see this in Aristotle's treatment of matter in *Metaphysics* Zeta 10, where he claims that, while the parts of a thing's form occur in its formula, "matter in itself is unknowable [*hē d' hulē agnōstos kath' hautēn*]."[20] Here Aristotle cannot mean that all matter has a mysterious nature that human reason is powerless to cognize: He gives examples of matter as mundane as bronze, flesh, and bones.[21] Rather, we can grasp what Aristotle means by noticing that he is at this point treating form as the aspect of a thing that is captured by a proper account of it (its *logos*). To say that something is matter, by contrast, is not to give it any determinate characterization, but rather to treat it as an object *qua* determinable thing.[22] Therefore, like Hegel, Aristotle's reasons for rejecting the conclusion of the stripping argument concern the indeterminacy of the candidate that it offers.[23] Substance cannot be matter because it is a central component of the concept of substance to be a determinate particular (a *tode ti*), but to call something matter is to characterize it as determinable rather than determinate.

Thus far I have identified three affinities between Hegel and Aristotle. Both are concerned to account for the determinacy of particulars. Both are driven to consider the possibility that bare substrata are, strictly speaking, all there is (Aristotle seems to take this as a starting point in *Metaphysics* Zeta; Hegel claims it is the result of his Doctrine of Being). And both argue that this can't be right, or at least can't be the whole story, by using a version of the stripping argument. In what follows, I will suggest that the ways Hegel and Aristotle respond to the predicament generated by the stripping argument also show parallels.

## 4. Essence as a Condition of Determinacy

In section 2, I glossed Hegel's argument at the end of the Doctrine of Being as consisting, first, in a recognition that quantitative and qualitative determination treats subjects as indifferent bearers of possible determinations, different in kind from the things that determine them; and second, in the claim that qualitative and quantitative determination fails to determine what these subjects are. We might put the point by saying that if our account of determination makes the things determined indifferent to their determinations, then we have failed to give any account of determination at all, for we have said nothing about why or how anything should be one way and not another. As a sort of a last-ditch effort, the Doctrine of Being moves to consider qualitative determination brought about by discrete quantitative changes, which Hegel associates with "nodal lines." Examples are the ratio at which harmony is produced and the sudden state-changes of water from solid to liquid to gas.[24] This, however, also fails as an account of determinacy in so far as the determination is supposed to be *gradual*, with each small change making no essential difference to the character of the thing to

be determined, and yet must bring about some qualitative "leap" when a specific quantity is reached, "without having passed through the in-between stages and displaying qualities characteristically its own."[25] With the failure of nodal lines, we come to realize that the whole framework of measure amounts only to the recognition *that* things are determined by others, but we have given no account of *what* this determination consists in. Nor have we offered any way to understand what the subjects of determination are, if we reduce them to bare substrata.

In opening the Doctrine of Essence, Hegel puts this by saying that determination within the categories of being alone is "immediate [*unmittelbar*]."[26] Determination by a real measure, the crowning achievement of the Doctrine of Being, offers little insight into the nature of determination itself. It remains to flesh out that picture, or, as Hegel says, to "mediate" it. The characterization of the limits of the logic of being just given indicates what this mediation must provide. In addition to the truism that things are the subjects of determinations, we require an account of what it is to be such a subject of determination.

Another feature of Hegel's argument is helpful for understanding how an account of determination must proceed. One of the problematic features of the Doctrine of Being's model of determination was that it established too sharp an asymmetry between the things determined and the things that determine them. By treating subjects as pure *determinables*, containing none of their determinations within themselves, the Doctrine of Being robbed the thing to be determined of any ground it could have to be determined in one way rather than another.[27] Perhaps we can avoid reducing everything to indifferent and indeterminate substrata if, instead of treating subjects only as determinables, we can find a model of determination that treats the thing that is determined as a thing of the same type as those that do the determining, each with their own principles of determination.

Aristotle offers such an account of determination in the *Categories* with his theory of substantial predication. Unlike something that is merely "in" Socrates, like his pallor, the relationship that "human" bears to Socrates is, strictly speaking, no *relationship* at all.[28] When we say that Socrates is a human, we do not name *something else* that inheres in Socrates, but rather give *what Socrates as such is*. Thus, the predication of a substance by a secondary substance cannot, like the teacup with its particular diameter, be thought by abstracting from the property in question and treating the particular quality that the subject has as one of many possible determinations of that property (one of many possible diameters). We can strip Socrates of his color, but if we cease to think of Socrates as a human, we have ceased to think of Socrates at all. In this way, the *Categories* does not allow the sort of abstraction that fuels the stripping argument to proceed all the way down to a bare substrate. Strip as we will, we still strip properties off a *human*; *human* is not merely an attribute of the underlying subject, but what this underlying subject itself is, and hence represents no strippable property.[29]

In the first section of the *Doctrine of Essence*, under the heading "The Essential and the Inessential [*Das Wesentliche und das Unwesentliche*],"[30] Hegel considers a similar distinction between essential and inessential properties. This is presumably meant as a first pass at remedying the problems with the being-logical model of determination. Now, instead of supposing that all properties determine their subjects as indifferent measures, we suppose, in addition, that each thing has a determinate essence that describes the identity of the thing determined. This essence is defined to be whatever the thing is *apart* from its being-logical determinations: in Hegel's words, "simple equality with itself but in so far as it is the *negation* of the sphere of being as such."[31] Since the thing's essence, by definition, cannot be abstracted away from it, it forms an impenetrable core of determinacy which is immune from the stripping argument.

Hegel is quick, however, to highlight the shortcomings of this attempt to advance beyond being. He points out that this differentiation between a being and its essence induces a second distinction between the essential and inessential properties or aspects of any given thing.[32] If we distinguish Socrates himself from the pale walking thing, then we must also distinguish his inessential traits (his pallor, his perambulation) from his essential ones (his humanity, his animality). A problem arises, Hegel suggests, when we ask after the relationship between what is essential and what is inessential about Socrates. What makes it the case that these, together, are all properties of a particular pale, walking man? It cannot be his essence: the point of positing an essence was to identify a non-contingent core of Socrates that does *not* determine him to be either walking or not-walking, either white or not-white, etc. And it would be striking to say that it is these accidents themselves that explain their inherence in him. It seems that the ground of the essential and inessential properties of Socrates then "falls in a *third* [*in ein* Drittes *fällt*]."[33] But this third thing to which both the essence of Socrates and his present accidents belong is something that we have given no account of. So, the account of determinacy by appeal to essence is at best incomplete: We have still given no account of how the essential and inessential properties are determined to coexist in a particular. Furthermore, like the account of determinacy given at the end of the logic of being, what appears to be an answer here really just pushes the problem elsewhere. Instead of essence accounting for the determinacy of the thing, as it was intended to do, the positing of essence defers the question of determination to whatever unites the thing's essential and inessential properties.

Aristotle was familiar with an argument like this. In fact, it is widely thought that at least one motivation of Aristotle's theory of predication was the so-called third man argument that Plato sets out in *Parmenides* 132a—b. G.E.L. Owen glosses this argument as follows:

> PLATE HAD SAID: "When I call *A* a man and *B* a man, what does this common label 'a man' stand for? Not for the individual subject I apply

> it to, else it would stand indifferently for any such subject; but *A* and *B* cannot both be the single common thing we are after. So 'a man' stands for some third thing." But then, it is objected, *ex hypothesi* this third thing is *a man*. And thus we have three men where before we began with two, and by similar manipulations we can generate a fourth and a fifth.[34]

As Alan Code points out, the problem that this argument raises is not a problem with the infinity of men as such.[35] The problem is rather that this argument shows a way that the theory of predication might fail to do its job. We want to understand how it is that *man* applies to this particular man as well as that one. If, in order to answer this question, we need to appeal to a third man, and yet another man to explain the applicability of that man, and so on, then we will never get to the point of explaining how *man* applies to the man that we started with. Instead, we defer the question to that of the applicability of ever more abstract men.

Now, the theory of predication in the *Categories* was surely intended to address this problem. By distinguishing between *being in* and *being said of*, the *Categories* rejects the assumption that the "man" that is said of A and B must be a third thing. Rather, man just is what they each are. But, as Owen comments, the *Categories* represents "an early and interesting stage of Aristotle's pondering on the third man. It has seized the difference between the two sorts of predicate, but it has not yet swallowed all the implications."[36] If Hegel's argument succeeds, then it shows that the theory of predication in the *Categories* does not get around the Third Man so easily. In effect, Hegel resurrects the problem at the level of a thing's relationship to its own essence. We no longer need to appeal to another man in accounting for the fact that this man and that man share something in common, but even on the view in the *Categories* we do need to appeal to a third thing when we account for what unites what is merely "in" Socrates with his essence. This, also, is to defer the original question, and hence indicates a deficiency in the account.

In *Metaphysics* Zeta, Aristotle expresses greater acuity regarding this concern. He opens Chapter 6 by saying: "We must consider whether a thing is the same as, or different from, what being is for it [*to ti ēn einai*]. This is relevant to our investigation of substance, for a thing is thought to be no different from its own substance."[37] Aristotle states that he recognizes a hazard in allowing a gap between a thing and what it is to be that thing. One reason for wishing to avoid such a gap is the reason that Hegel has given. If we make the essence of a man anything other than that very man, then we seem to risk raising the third man problem again at the level of a thing's essence and its accidental properties. It seems that if man is to be essentially, rather than accidentally, predicated of a thing, then man must be that very thing, in all its contingency.[38]

Of course, to say this on its own is equally unsatisfactory. If each thing's essence simply is that thing, then we will have a hard time explaining how

essences can still be shared by multiple particulars, and how inessential properties can exist at all. I do not have space here to go into Aristotle's treatment of these problems or the progression of Hegel's account. However, I hope what I have said so far has been enough to show that Aristotle and Hegel are attempting to navigate similar terrain in giving their respective accounts of essence.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

My object in this paper has been to highlight similarities between Hegel and Aristotle in their respective metaphysical projects. Needless to say, there are important differences between Hegel's and Aristotle's treatment of these issues that I have left untouched. Whereas Aristotle's arguments concern in the first instance beings, Hegel's arguments concern, in the first instance, thoughts. Whereas Aristotle endorses the law of non-contradiction, Hegel can seem eager to embrace contradictions.

Despite these differences, the depth and significance of which must be evaluated elsewhere,[39] I believe the kinship between Hegelian and Aristotelian metaphysics is substantial. Hegel and Aristotle both confront issues about determinacy: for Aristotle, the determinacy of substance, for Hegel, the determinacy of thought. Both employ a version of the stripping argument to show how a certain type of determination—the determination of a thing by external qualities and quantities—is not fully intelligible in isolation from an account of essential determination. Hegel, like Aristotle, recognizes two competing claims on an account of determination: first, what determines something must be sufficiently separate for appeal to it to count as *determination*. At the same time, if a thing's principle of determination is external to it, then we can ask how that thing is related to its principle of determination in such a way that we are led to a regress. This presents a serious problem for how we are to give an account of determination. While I have not had space to argue the point in full, I think that navigating these pressures remains a driving force behind both Hegel's Doctrine of Essence and Aristotle's *Metaphysics* as they each treat topics like form, matter, and activity.

Apart from these specific points of contact, I have aimed to illustrate a broader methodological similarity. Aristotle and Hegel both proceed by considering successive candidates for characterizing their topic, and show the limitations and contradictions associated with each one, advancing piecemeal to a better understanding.[40] The problems that Aristotle and Hegel raise for each candidate are not problems in the sense that they show certain characterizations of determinate particulars to be outright incorrect. Rather, the problems Hegel and Aristotle raise are problems with the independent intelligibility of each candidate.[41] Things have quantities, but to understand what it is to have a quantity, it does not suffice to understand measurement alone. Substances underlie—but what is it that underlies? And

what is it *to* underlie? If we want to understand *Sein*, Hegel finds, we must understand *Wesen*; if we want to understand *hupokeimena*, says Aristotle, we must investigate *to ti ēn einai*.[42]

## Notes

1 G.W.F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic* (henceforth SL) trans. George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 9; G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (henceforth *Werke*), eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), Vols. 5–6, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, 5: 16.
2 SL 42; Hegel, *Werke* 5: 61.
3 SL 14; Hegel, *Werke* 5: 22. My translation.
4 Klaus Hartmann asserts rather bluntly that even though one can "read Hegel's insights back into Aristotle", Aristotle's concept of essence lacked the intricacies that Hegel wished to capture with his concept of *Wesen*. See Klaus Hartmann, *Hegels Logik* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), 166.
5 See Walter Kern, "Die Aristotelesdeutung Hegels," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 78, no. 2 (1971): 237–259, esp. 243–248, for a dated, but thorough, review of literature on Hegel's interpretation of Aristotle. Kern himself also focuses on Hegel's reading of *De Anima*. The trend seems to have continued in more recent decades. Tobias Dangel, *Hegel und die Geistmetaphysik des Aristoteles* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), treats Hegel's reception of Aristotelian metaphysics, but focuses on how Hegel's metaphysics of Spirit takes up Aristotle's concept of *nous*. He has less to say about how Hegel engages with Aristotle's concepts of substance and essence as treated in the core books of the *Metaphysics*. Alfredo Ferrarin, 2001, *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), likewise spends more time on Aristotle's psychology, and although his book contains a considerable discussion of "the Aristotelian Heritage in the *Science of Logic*" (129–148), he still maintains that "we find no extensive reference to, let alone a discussion of, Aristotle in the Logic of Essence" (189). Like K. Hartmann, *Hegels Logik* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), 166, he attributes this to the fixity and stability of Aristotle's conception of essence which Hegel apparently sought to undermine (Ferrarin, 192).
6 SL 59; Hegel, *Werke* 5: 82.
7 SL 302; Hegel, *Werke* 5: 412.
8 SL 326; Hegel, *Werke* 5: 445. Translation modified.
9 SL 326; Hegel, *Werke* 5: 446. Translation modified.
10 See, for example, SL 399; Hegel, *Werke* 6: 99, SL 403; *Werke* 6: 102–103, SL 429–30; *Werke* 6: 137–138, SL 503–505; *Werke* 6: 237–240.
11 English quotations are from the translation of David Bostock, *Aristotle. Metaphysics: Books Z and H* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). For the Greek text I have used Werner Jaeger, *Aristotelis. Metaphysica* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957).
12 *Metaphysics* 1028b32.
13 *Metaphysics* 1028b34–1028b35.
14 *Metaphysics* 1029b36–1029b37.
15 *Metaphysics* 1029a10–1029a19.
16 For example, Myles Burnyeat, *A Map of Metaphysics Zeta* (Pittsburgh: Mathesis Publications, 2001), 15.
17 *Metaphysics* 1029b36–1029b37.
18 *Metaphysics* 1029a20–1029a22. For our purposes, we can leave aside the two interpretative issues usually raised in connection with this passage: whether Aristotle is discussing his own conception of matter here, and whether this is well

described as "prime" matter. On the former, see Frank Lewis, *How Aristotle Gets by in Metaphysics Zeta* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 43–59. Some important questions about whether the latter debate is productive are raised in Donald Stahl, "Stripped Away: Some Contemporary Obscurities Surrounding *Metaphysics* Z 3 (1029a10–1029a26)," *Phronesis* 26, no. 2 (1981): 177–180.

19 See *Metaphysics* 1029a27.
20 *Metaphysics* 1036a8.
21 See *Metaphysics* 1029a4, 1034a5–1034a8.
22 See Wilfrid Sellars, "Aristotle's Metaphysics: An Interpretation," in Sellars, *Philosophical Perspectives: History of Philosophy* (Atascerado, California: Ridgeview, 1967), 73–124.
23 Note Aristotle's use of the verb *horidzesthai* at 1029a18 and 21. Malcolm Schofield suggests "made determinate" as a possible translation for the former occurrence, and we can carry over his suggestion to the latter occurrence as well. See Malcolm Schofield, "Metaph. Z 3: Some Suggestions," *Phronesis* 17, no. 2 (1978): 98–101.
24 SL 320–321; Hegel, *Werke* 5: 438–440.
25 SL 321; Hegel, *Werke* 5: 440.
26 SL 337; Hegel, *Werke* 6: 16.
27 Hegel makes a similar point when he describes essence in its initial guise as the "*caput mortuum* of abstraction" in a remark on §112 of the *Encyclopedia* logic. On this, see G.R.G Mure, *A Study of Hegel's Logic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), 80–81.
28 Compare G.E.L. Owen, "The Platonism of Aristotle," in *Articles on Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Malcolm Schofield and Richard Sorabji (London: Duckworth, 1975), 22–23. The background is the account of change as the departure or perishing of particular abstract *qualia* (hots, colds, larges, smalls) in the *Phaedo* (102–106). Robert Pippin has suggested this to me as a possible shared origin for Aristotle's and Hegel's thinking about the stripping argument. On this, see also Michael Theunissen, *Sein und Schein: die Kritische Funktion der Hegelschen Logik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), 322.
29 Compare Michael J. Loux, *Primary Ousia: An Essay on Aristotle's Metaphysics Z and H* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 61–64.
30 SL 341; Hegel, *Werke* 6: 18.
31 SL 341; Hegel, *Werke* 6: 18. Translation modified.
32 SL 341–342; Hegel, *Werke* 6: 18–19.
33 SL 342; Hegel, *Werke* 6: 18. My translation. Hegel's emphasis.
34 Owen, "Platonism of Aristotle", 22–23.
35 Alan Code, "On the Origin of Some Aristotelian Theses About Predication," in *How Things Are: Studies in Predication and the History of Philosophy and Science*, ed. James Bogen and James E. McGuire (Dordrecht: Springer, 1984), 101–131.
36 Owen, "Platonism of Aristotle", 23.
37 *Metaphysics* 1031a15–1031a16.
38 On this, see Code, "Some Aristotelian Theses", 50.
39 One of the best studies to consider how deep the differences between Hegel and Aristotle run is still Nicolai Hartmann, *Aristoteles und Hegel* (Erfurt: Verlag Kurt Stenger, 1933). Hartmann finds in Aristotle's empiricism the "genuinely Hegelian thesis [*echt Hegelsche These*]" that universals are immanent in particulars, and also considers the relationship of logic to metaphysics in both thinkers (6; 17ff.).
40 See Hartmann, *Aristoteles*, especially 7–9, also on the relationship of Aristotle's method of *aporia* to Hegel's philosophical method. See also Liberato

Santoro-Brienza, "Aristotle and Hegel on Nature: Some Similarities," *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* 26, no. 2 (1992): 13–29, on the ways that Aristotle's engagement with his predecessors prefigures Hegel's dialectical method.

41 A similar conclusion is reached by Mary Louise Gill, *Aristotle on Substance: The Paradox of Unity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 18–19.

42 I would like to thank Robert Pippin, Anton Friedrich Koch, Hannah McKeown and the audience at the 2016 Biennial Meeting of the Hegel Society of America for feedback on earlier drafts that led to important clarifications and improvements.

# 8 The Aristotelian Metaphysics of Hegel's "Soul"

*Allegra de Laurentiis*

> The god driven to self-knowledge is nothing but Spirit's own absolute law.
>
> —Hegel, *Encyclopedia* §377A

## 1. Introduction

In what follows, Hegel's connection to Aristotle is purposely simplified as if it were a direct one. A more accurate version of this story would have to include (minimally) Plotinus as a mediator between the two, in particular with regard to the conception of the divine *nous*. On the other hand, I take solace in being able to appeal to Hegel's self-interpretation in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, as expressed in his statement that Plotinus's doctrine of "thinking thinking itself" is "wholly Aristotelian."[1] I argue that Hegel's pervasive employment, in the Philosophy of Spirit, of Aristotelian conceptuality (mostly from *Metaphysics* and *De Anima*) is enlightening with respect to his uses of *Geist* as well as to the specific meanings of *Seele*, of the living body, and of their unity and distinction in various conditions (not least empirical human conditions like insanity, prenatal life, or sleep). In a further step, I outline what I take to be Hegel's convincing interpretation of a crucial but obscure argument made by Aristotle to the effect that while thinking (*noein*) is an activity of the soul (*psuchē*), and the soul is inseparable from the body, one kind of thinking is actually independent of corporeity. I argue, in other words, that Hegel's reading of Aristotle is both needed to better understand Hegel's own notions of soul and Spirit, and helpful in the clarification of perplexing Aristotelian conceptions of the double relation of *psuchē* to *sōma* and to *nous*.

The metaphysical claim of this essay is that the strength of Hegel's and Aristotle's accounts of life, its motions, and its activities lies in their shared hylomorphic and entelechistic conception of being-soul. "Hylomorphic" is being used here as a convenient shorthand to indicate that in both philosophies (though admittedly more explicitly in Hegel) "soul" denotes the concept of an existent that is at once physical and immaterial. The concept of a living animal, for example, differs from that of a corpse because of this ontological hybridity. "Entelechistic" refers to a peculiar feature of both

philosophers' hylomorphism, namely: in the living individual,[2] the relation between materiality and immateriality (or matter and form) is not symmetrical, and the immaterial pole of the relation is what leads the individual towards completion of its potentialities—it is, in other words, the entelechy of the individual. In Aristotle, form is "superior" to matter in the sense that it is the active principle that guides the individual's life activities from beginning to end. Bodily organs have, of course, the body's life as their goal; but the body is an instrument for goals beyond itself—for example, the continuation of the species, or perhaps divine life. In Hegel's more developmental conception, "soul" or "natural Spirit" denotes an initially natural movement of self-differentiations and their successive sublations into new organizations, whose natural dimension becomes increasingly dependent on the spiritual. Life is a teleological reality that begins in nature (as organisms) and is driven beyond nature (as thinking organisms).

My claims about Hegel's profound debt to Aristotle imply neither that Hegel provides the most accurate translations nor that they are the best paraphrases of the relevant Greek texts (though I also believe that most of Hegel's renditions are to this day superior to many available ones; but this cannot be shown here).[3] Indeed, just like Aristotle in his recapitulations of the philosophies of his predecessors, Hegel is not concerned with providing close renditions or literal translations but rather with unearthing the truth of his predecessors' thought. As he states in the 1820 Introduction to the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*: "Philosophy is knowledge of reason, the history of its development must itself be something rational, the history of philosophy must itself be philosophical."[4] A modern philosopher's employment of ancient concepts must necessarily go beyond their original meaning, or philosophy would be nothing but a series of echoes. The history of philosophy is not a natural history or chronicle (*Historie*) of past ideas, and neither is it a story of the eternal recurrence of the same ideas under different guises (*Überlieferung*). Rather, it is a developmental history (*Geschichte*) of the fundamental notions or principles of past systems of thought.

It is a striking fact, whose implications were discussed already in the 1960s by Mure and Weiss,[5] that Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit is bookended by a lavish praise of *De Anima*,[6] according to which the latter is a uniquely speculative work in the millenarian history of soul conceptions, and by a lengthy quotation from *Metaphysics* Lambda, according to which "we say that the eternal, best living being is the god" or, more literally, "we say that the eternal, best animal is the god [*phamen de ton theon einai zōon aidion ariston*]."[7] Hegel's framing of the Philosophy of Spirit in this manner could be viewed as a stylistic matter—a eulogy rather than a substantial adoption of Aristotelian metaphysics. However, I join a long line of interpreters in contributing evidence that Hegel's "editorial" choice does not constitute mere encomium. To the contrary, he views his *Realphilosophie* of Spirit as a long overdue completion of Aristotle's theory of life in all its forms, from the life of self-moving organisms to the life of self-thinking thought.

Hegel's Aristotelianism has been recognized for most of the past two hundred years. As early as 1810, Bachmann's review of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, published only three years earlier, calls Hegel "the German Aristotle;"[8] Lasson, editor of the *Sämtliche Werke*, speaks of Hegel "modeling" his philosophy after Aristotle;[9] Findlay calls Hegel "the Aristotle of our post-Renaissance world;"[10] Randall, in the Introduction to his *Aristotle*, writes almost casually that the Stagirite "like Hegel" thought of his philosophy as "the last word of speculation;"[11] and the in-depth works of Mure[12] and Düsing[13] analyze in detail the parallels, the borrowings, and the profound philosophical affinity between the two bodies of work.[14] Despite some significantly differing views, the following four theses may find broad agreement. They may serve as background for the discussion of the two particular topics subsequently addressed in sections two and three. However, a *caveat* is in order: these four theses focus on aspects of Aristotle's presence in Hegel's theoretical philosophy. The profound debt to Aristotle's practical philosophy evident in Hegel's conceptions of natural right, custom, and political praxis are matters for a different study.

(a) *The Philosophy of Spirit is intended as a completion of Aristotle's program (which Hegel in turn considers a completion of the philosophy of Plato).*

In particular, Hegel understands the first subsection of the *Encyclopedia*'s Subjective Spirit ("Anthropology. The Soul") as a past due expansion and development of the philosophy of those natural substances that are, in Aristotle's expression, "possessed of life."[15] But Aristotelian conceptuality affects Hegel's exposition of Spirit well beyond the confines of the Anthropology. In the lecture "The Philosophy of Aristotle," he praises the Stagirite's superiority to Plato "insofar as the former has known the most thoroughgoing speculation, idealism," and because he is the first to have conceived of "*absolute substance*, the true, or being in-and-for-itself. . . . There is no higher idealism."[16] According to Hegel, implicit in Aristotle's thinking is a notion of subjectivity allegedly absent from the Platonic *corpus*. Hegel is not speaking of a Platonic neglect of the particular subjectivity of human types or of historical individuals—say, the nature of the tyrant, of the slave, of Alcibiades, or of Socrates—but of the absence of a metaphysical concept of subjectivity as implied, Hegel thinks, by the concept of life:

> Platonic subject matter [*das Platonische*] generally represents objectivity, but it lacks a principle of animation [*Lebendigkeit*], a principle of subjectivity; and this . . . not in the sense of a contingent, only particular subjectivity, but in the sense of pure subjectivity, is proper to Aristotle.[17]

As for Hegel's understanding of Aristotle as perfecter and sublator of Plato (a vast and controversial topic that cannot be addressed here), this view is

captured most tersely by two of Aristotle's own comments: "it has been well said that the soul is a place of ideas: except that [first,] this is not true of the whole soul but only of the thinking, and [second,] it applies to the ideas not actually, but potentially."[18] And:

> A thing moves . . . by force or by thought or something else . . . But again Plato cannot even say what he sometimes supposes to be the source of movement . . . for the soul, according to him, is later and simultaneous with the heavens.[19]

(b) *For both philosophers, the coincidence of being and logos is most effectively demonstrated by the existence of live individuals.*

With regard to the link of ontology and logic in general—a connection concisely rendered by Hegel in the famous formulation "thus *logic* coincides with *metaphysics*, with the science of *things* grasped in *thoughts*"[20]—both Aristotle and Hegel draw attention to the living individual, i.e., the animal (*to zōon*; *das Tier*) or the ensouled (*to empsuchon*; *das Beseelte*), as prototype of this coincidence. One of the many passages in which Hegel uses "the ensouled" is from the Phenomenology of Spirit section of the *Encyclopedia*: "What is not living has no appetency . . . The ensouled instead and Spirit necessarily possess appetency, because neither soul nor Spirit can exist without holding contradiction within themselves and either feeling it or knowing about it."[21] Both philosophers consider living individuals as singular embodiments of a continuum of material and immaterial being—or of corporeity and "ideality," the term Hegel prefers as antonym of corporeity in explicit acknowledgment of the *eidos* in Aristotle's matter-form unity. This focus on life forms, however, does not have mere illustrative functions. It is Hegel's contention that, implicitly at least, the Aristotelian organism is what his own Philosophy of Nature has explicitly determined it to be, namely, living proof of the existence of a unity that is neither an aggregate nor a compound (as in mechanical and chemical systems) but a genuine individual: Aristotle's *sunolon*, Hegel's *Einheit* or *Totalität*.

Truth be told, Aristotle uses *sunolon* much more sparingly than Hegel uses either "unity" or "totality." Still, the customary rendition of *sunolon* as "compound" (for which Aristotle has at his disposal *sunthetos* and other expressions) is problematic. The following instance (from Hick's translation) is significant because the sentence belongs contextually to Aristotle's criticism of theories of knowledge as knowledge of compounds: "Granted that it were possible for the soul to know and perceive each constituent of all these composite things: with what, however, will it know or perceive *the compound* [*to sunolon*] itself, such as what god or man or flesh or bone is?"[22] As for Hegel's notion of the individual as a totality that is not a composite, the Philosophy of Nature (in addition to the Anthropology) offers numerous examples: the teleological character of live individuals is defined

as "*one* rounded-off totality in itself;" sentience is "the *third* form of the totality . . . of which soul-ness [*das Seelenhafte*] constitutes the quintessence"; or, the animal is a "developed totality" of inorganic nature transitioning from mere externality to natural "subjectivity."[23]

(c) *In Aristotle as in Hegel, the culmination of life's activities is self-thinking thought or absolute knowing. It is in this Aristotelian framework that Hegel upholds his version of a cosmic objective teleology.*

Hegel links explicitly his concept of speculative knowing to the self-thinking thinking of Aristotle's intellect. However, Hegel does gloss over an important difference between his own conception of pure knowing and Aristotle's active intellect. The pure activity envisaged in *Metaphysics* Lambda and in *De Anima* 3.4 and 5 is not meant as a productive, let alone creative activity, because its noematic content is neither generated nor "determined" (as Hegel would have it) by thinking, but simply found by it. For Aristotle, thinking *per se* is not the supreme, divine activity. Only its content makes it so. And, indeed, he remarks that

> thinking . . . will belong even to one who has the worst of thoughts. Therefore . . . thinking cannot be the noblest thing . . . [I]t must think itself, if it is to be the best, and is a thinking that is thinking of thinking [*noēsis noēseōs noēsis*].[24]

Hegel instead attributes to pure thinking the capacity to produce its own determinations, as the *Science of Logic* is meant to demonstrate. Here, speculative thinking is much less contemplative than it is self-generative.

This idea marks, therefore, a dramatic shift away from Aristotle's letter and spirit, a difference that Hegel covers over by claiming that "pure subjectivity" is implied in Aristotle's self-thinking thinking, thus also justifying his appraisal of Plato's disciple as speculatively "superior" to the master.[25] In the Philosophy of Spirit, Hegel speaks of *Vernunft* (an Old High German substantivizing of *Vernehmen*, the inward processing of what has been taken up through *Aufnehmen*)[26] as if it derived from *nous*. Regardless of the trustworthiness of this etymology, Hegel's employment of *Vernunft* eventually transforms *nous* past recognition. In the Preface to the 1807 *Phenomenology* he already describes similar transformations of principles in the history of philosophy:

> The life of God and divine knowing may well be expressed in terms of love's play with itself; yet this representation sinks into mere edification, even insipidness, if the earnestness, the sorrow, the patience and labor of the negative are absent from it. . . . *In itself* that life may well be unclouded sameness and unity with itself . . . but [from] this *in itself* . . . has been abstracted its very nature, namely, being *for itself* . . . Aristotle

> determines nature as end-directed activity, the end is the . . . *quiescent*, the unmoved that is *itself moving*; as such, it is *subject* . . . The need to represent the absolute as *subject* used to employ the propositions: *God* is the eternal, or the moral world order, or love. . . . But this word ["God"] indicates . . . not a being or an essence or a universal . . . but one reflected in itself, a subject.[27]

Taking Hegel at his word, then, may imply reading back into ancient and early Christian texts the attempt to conceptualize an inwardness or subjectivity that is historically not yet available to them. Aristotle's living *ousia* would then indeed express "that being, which is in truth *subject*,"[28] and the *nous* would be carrying within itself the connotation of absolute subjectivity.

(d) *A further case of Hegel's simultaneous indebtedness to and departure from Aristotle is his reinterpretation of the passive and active intellect.*

In the Aristotle lecture, Hegel construes the passive and active intellect as in-itself and for-itself conditions of Spirit, respectively. Only their unity, intellection in an "absolute" mode, earns the designation "Spirit in-and-for-itself." In the *Encyclopedia*, Spirit-in-itself is referred to as "sunk in corporeity" or "captive in nature."[29] The for-itself condition of Spirit is instead referred to as *der gewordene Geist*, Spirit that has become out of self-external nature[30] (see full quote below). Critics have pointed out, however, that Aristotle's *nous pathētikos* is not at all coterminous with *phusis* or nature. Furthermore, the Aristotelian idea of the passive intellect's relative independence from the active gives way in Hegel to the increasing dependence of nature (via its self-sublation) from forms of Spirit. This would imply, if Hegel's proposed parallelism were upheld, a gradually increasing dependence of the passive from the active intellect. Yet the idea of a self-sublation of the former into the latter seems entirely alien to Aristotle's thinking.

Hegel's explication of this self-transformative process begins already in the Introduction to the Philosophy of Nature, where nature is said to be "delivered" by the emergence of Spirit: given that nature is "in itself reason," reason "flows out from nature into existence,"[31] that is, into forms of Spirit. A more detailed (if not pellucid) formulation of this process is found again in the opening paragraph of the Anthropology:

> Spirit has *become* as the truth of nature. . . . Spirit that has become means therefore that nature self-sublates over against itself [*dass die Natur an ihr selbst . . . sich aufhebt*] as the untrue, and hence that Spirit presupposes itself no longer in corporeal, *self-external* singularity, but as universality that is *simple* in its concreteness and totality, [a universality] in which Spirit is *soul*, not yet Spirit.[32]

This is indeed a radical departure from Aristotle's understanding of the potentialities inherent in *phusis*, *psuchē*, and *nous pathētikos*. Yet despite

Hegel's idiosyncratic expansion of "passive intellect" to include nature, in fact the principal referent of *Natur* in the Aristotle lecture and Anthropology is the living individual. With this in mind, Hegel's assimilation of the passive intellect to nature is less disconcerting. It is intended to denote the gradual control and increased mastery of the individual's body by preconscious soul, then by consciousness, and finally by intelligence and will in fully developed Spirit (*der wirkliche Geist*). While one will search in vain in Aristotle's philosophy for an explicit statement of this pathway from substance to subject, one may agree with Hegel that the journey is not itself incompatible with, and perhaps even implied by this ancient treatise on life and thought.

* * *

The following two sections discuss only a subset of the themes common to these four theses. Section Two discusses Hegel's debt to *De Anima* with regards to the hylomorphism and entelechism of being-soul. Section Three argues that Hegel's notion of a self-dirempting Spirit sheds useful light on an enigmatic feature of Aristotle's *nous*.

## 2. On Re-Introducing the Concept in the Science of Spirit

It is well-known that Hegel considers neither pre-Kantian rational psychology ("pneumatology") nor empirical psychology able to deliver adequate accounts of their subject matter, i.e., of the psyche or soul.[33] Rational psychology cannot explain its object because, despite assurances to the contrary, it treats soul as a "thing" by ascribing to her quantitative, qualitative, spatial, and temporal features. Empirical psychology limits itself to the observable manifestations of what it hypothesizes as "soul"—or of things it regards as (inexplicably) en-souled. Hence empirical psychology cannot explain the unifying ground or logic of the diverse expressions and faculties it studies.

By contrast, Hegel extols *De Anima* for its historically unique, speculative treatment of the topic:

> *Aristotle*'s books on the soul together with his writings on her particular aspects and states are therefore still to this day the most exquisite or the only work of speculative interest on this subject matter. The essential goal of a Philosophy of Spirit can only lie in re-introducing the Concept into the knowledge of Spirit, thus also re-disclosing the sense of those Aristotelian books.[34]

Hence *De Anima* represents for Hegel the first ancient outline of a genuinely speculative philosophy of Spirit. In Hegel's reading, there is no theoretical gap between the exposition of *psuchē* and that of *nous* in the treatise.[35] He

reads *De Anima* as a systematic (if, relatively speaking, sketchy) account of the continuum from life to thought. He objects to literalist readings of Aristotle's illustrations of theoretical points such as the wax-and-seal metaphor that exemplifies the sensible soul's impressions: the point of the analogy, Hegel stresses, is that in the case of the soul, she "assumes the form itself into her own substance, assimilates it in such a way that the soul in herself is virtually the whole of sentience"[36] And indeed Aristotle explains his simile explicitly:

> there is no need to ask whether soul and body are one, nor whether the wax and the imprint are, nor in general whether the matter of each thing is one with that of which it is the matter: for, of all the many ways in which we speak of the one and of being, actuality [*entelecheia*] is the meaning most proper.[37]

Hegel's thesis of the logical continuity of living body, soul, and intellect in *De Anima* is further corroborated by Aristotle's own characterizations of the *nous* as "the part of the soul with which she knows and understands;" "that of the soul which we call intellect;" or "that whereby the soul thinks and conceives."[38] Beyond this, there are for Hegel intra-systematic reasons for grasping *psuchē* and *nous* as moments of a continuum—just as is the case with his own *Seele* and *Geist*.

The architectonic of Hegel's system offers clues as to how he intends to articulate transitions only implicit in Aristotle's account. The *Encyclopedia* is modeled after the Stoic division of philosophy into Logic, Physics, and Ethics. It begins with a study of the subject matter of pure thought: the logical (*das Logische*), followed by a study of nature, and then Spirit. The categories that structure the logical also determine the systematic positions and meanings of the principles (*Grundbegriffe*) of nature and Spirit. The study of subjective Spirit (first part of the study of Spirit) follows immediately upon the study of nature. The so-called subjective dimension of Spirit refers therefore to an objective existence[39] that links ahistorical nature with genuinely historical Spirit. Subjective Spirit's three subdivisions, the anthropology of the soul, the phenomenology of consciousness, and the psychology of mind faculties, explicate respectively the being, essence, and concept (as union of the being and essence) of subjective Spirit. Already this arrangement shows that the soul of the Anthropology is the conceptual link between nature and Spirit. Ontologically, she belongs to both.

Furthermore, the architectonic of the system is reflected, as in a fractal pattern, in the structure of the parts. For example, the "being" of Spirit-as-soul spans in turn the gamut from its being to its essence to its concept. The soul's being (treated under "a. The natural soul") is her existence as substance that is not yet subject—though individualization and subjectivation are her *archē* or implicit end.[40] In this mere being, she is the world soul or "universal planetary life,"[41] subject to geology, climate, seasons or

circadian rhythms; she assimilates her surroundings, reproduces her *Gestalt*, and eventually even receives impressions, becoming sentient (*empfindend*). The soul's essence ("b. The feeling soul") consists of the activity of feeling (*fühlen*) both her affections and herself as their receiver, a condition for her further capacity to master her body through self-habituation. (In genuinely Aristotelian fashion, Hegel criticizes conceptions of the body as possessing the soul, while he consistently writes of the soul as possessing the body.)[42] The soul's concept ("c. The actual soul") marks the threshold to consciousness: the study of life-forms runs here into that of Spirit proper. This is the realm of the fully anthropological soul. As Aristotle may put it, we enter here the province of animals having more than self-motion, assimilation, reproduction, appetency, pain and pleasure, or imagination: animals with "understanding and reason, like man and others like him or possibly superior to him."[43]

Hegel's *Seele* denotes therefore an unbroken process that begins in living nature and culminates with human individuality. He describes the relative position of the soul on reality's continuum in the Preliminary Conception to the *Encyclopedia Logic*: "Spirit differentiates itself from the soul, which in turn is the middle between corporeity and Spirit, or the bond between them. Spirit as soul is sunk in corporeity, and the soul is what animates [*das Belebende*] the body."[44] Antecedents of the Anthropology's "soul" are found in the Philosophy of Nature: from the "appearance of mechanical soulfulness [*Seelenhaftigkeit*]" in quivering and sounding bodies[45] in Physics, to the "animal subject" defined by irritability (*Irritabilität*), sensibility (*Sensibilität*), and reproduction (*Reproduktion*) in Organics.[46] The Anthropology section picks up where Organics leaves off: it is a study in preconscious, individual life. Phenomenology and Psychology are then tasked with explaining forms of Spirit emerging from "selfness [*Selbstischkeit*],"[47] which is a crude version of selfhood consisting of the feeling soul's presaging the "I" through the indistinct awareness that her feelings are her *own*: "in the *middle* between *representational consciousness* . . . and *immediate sentience* . . . there is . . . the self-*feeling* or *presaging soul* [*ahnende Seele*]."[48]

As persuasive as this phenomenological account is, it can be justified only in light of the psyche's hylomorphic and entelechistic nature. While the use of "entelechistic" may be less controversial, given the general acknowledgment of Hegel's dynamic and teleological ontology, "hylomorphic" may have a variety of connotations, some of which are trivial—if used as a label for "matter-and-form"—and others misleading, if *morphē* is taken to mean the shape rather than the inner forming principle of the body.[49] No matter the name, Hegel's conception is undoubtedly an expansion of Aristotle's account of the affections as "enmattered forms [*logoi enuloi*]"[50] that Hegel extends to the totality of the soul. Aristotle argues that only a double account can do justice to the nature of the affections. The true philosopher will define "anger" neither only naturalistically as "boiling of the blood, heat about the heart" (as a *phusikos* would), nor only discursively as "desire

for retaliation" (as a *dialektikos* would). Anger takes place only when both conditions obtain. The whole of Hegel's *Seele* accords with this. She is a somatic as well as spiritual existent. Recognizing the ontologically hybrid nature of Hegel's soul is key to understanding his conceptions of human mental phenomena like derangement, the sharing of pre-conscious soul contents by two distinct individuals (as in fetal and hypnotic conditions), the self-relation of the individual in sleep, and a host of other states we refer to today as "psychosomatic"—though the correct Hegelian term would have to be "spiritual-somatic," because "psyche" already denotes the totality of body and Spirit.[51]

The Philosophy of Spirit's "disclosure" of the sense of *De Anima* relies of course on more Aristotelian principles than those just discussed. It relies, for example, on the idea of a continuity of soul-conditions from potentiality (*dunamis*) of a body "capable of life"[52] to first actualization(s) (*entelecheia hē prōte*)[53] of that potential to the soul's highest actualization in the exercise of self-thinking thought. In Hegel, this becomes the journey from soul to Absolute Spirit. The initial "world soul"[54] refers to the totality of conditions (chemical, geological, climatic) for the existence of organisms. As in the poignant passage from *Encyclopedia* §388 quoted in section 1, this natural Spirit is "not yet Spirit." Successive actualizations of this potentiality eventually lead to the emergence of *anthropos*, whose leave-taking from mere bodily existence includes becoming self-conscious, intelligent, and volitional. Like assimilation and the reception of sensible forms by *psuchē*, so *Seele*'s sentience, feeling, and first cognitive processes are cases of the active inwardization (*Erinnerung*) of externality. Repetition, habit formation (*ethismos*; *Gewohnheit*), memorization (*mnēmē*; *Gedächtnis*), and reproduction by the imagination (*phantasia*; *Einbildungskraft*) are related activities by which individuals progressively downgrade their physicality to necessary but no longer sufficient condition of themselves. Even the historical deeds of Spirit, whose initially confined existence as "local spirits" expands to "World Spirit" (thus allegedly demonstrating the "presence of *reason* in history"),[55] are in the end inconceivable without acknowledgment of what is initially just "soul." There would be no World Spirit without a world soul. Finally, the self-knowing of Absolute Spirit in art, religion, and speculative philosophy expresses for Hegel the *entelecheia* of reality, i.e., the Idea, whose Aristotelian lineage he indicates by occasionally calling it "divine."

The last paragraph of the *Encyclopedia* (§577) explains the system as having demonstrated the Idea's diremption into two "appearances": nature, reason's objective existence, and Spirit, reason's subjective activity. Hence, nature and Spirit are manifestations of the same reason, which in turn is the truth or concept of the Idea. All along, Hegel's systematic philosophy has been explicating this reason's movement, from its natural *Dasein* to speculative knowing—Hegel's name for Aristotle's "theoretical knowledge." From Hegel's perspective (and disregarding terminological anachronisms) the first

formulations of "absolute idealism" are indeed not his own, but are found in the *Metaphysics* and *De Anima*:[56]

> And thought in itself . . . becomes an object of thought in coming into contact with and thinking its objects, so that thought and object of thought are the same.[57]
>
> The intellect itself is included among the objects which can be thought. For where the object is among the matter-less things, the intellect and the intelligible are one and the same: and in fact speculative knowledge [*epistēmē hē theōrētikē*] and its object are the same.[58]

## 3. Objectivity and Subjectivity of Absolute Reason

I have argued that the Aristotelian roots of Hegel's concepts of living nature, soul, Spirit, and their connections help illuminate his overall account. But it is also the case, *vice versa*, that Hegel's modern concept of *Geist* helps disentangle some of Aristotle's conundrums. I will briefly discuss one of these by way of example. The following passage from *De Anima* 3.4 has received much attention in Aristotle scholarship, and for good reasons:

> As to the part of the soul with which it knows and understands, whether it be separable or not spatially separable but logically distinguishable, . . . [i]f thinking is like perceiving, it will be something acted upon by the thought object; . . . then thinking must be impassive [*apathēs*] and yet receptive [*dektikon*] of the form and potentially like this form [*dunamei toioūton*], though not the same [*mē touto*] . . . [A]s the sensible faculty is to the sensed objects, so is the intellect to the thought objects.[59]

Aristotle seems to be saying that the analogy between sensing and thinking is strong, but can be taken only so far. On the one hand, they are capacities of the soul; they both require a degree of receptivity if the soul is to live and sense and think. Both are active in selectively receiving their objects, not in matter but in form (sensing accepts sensible forms, thinking accepts intelligible forms). Thus, both are potentially like, but not actually the same as, their respective contents. On the other hand, there is a radical difference between the two. First, the intellect is impervious to change from without in ways that sensibility is not. It cannot, for example, be damaged by thoughts that are too powerful, while a sensing capacity can be dulled or destroyed by extreme sensations.[60] Second, this difference is not a matter of degree. Despite traditional opinions, thinking is no enhanced version of perception: Homer, Democritus, and Empedocles did not distinguish perception from thought, or soul from intellect[61] (just like, 2,000 years later, mind-naturalists do not distinguish *Seele* from *Geist*). Rather, thinking has unique features identified by Anaxagoras: *nous* is "unmixed" (*amigēs*) because wholly different from all else, and this makes it *apathēs*, unaffectable by anything else.

Since for Anaxagoras everything except *nous* is material, the meaning of "unaffectable" becomes indistinguishable from "immaterial."[62]

Aristotle is in full agreement with this version of Anaxagoreanism: he analogizes the intellect with light that makes the invisible visible, and concludes: "this intellect is separable and impassive and unmixed, being in its substance activity."[63] This impassivity, however, would have to include invulnerability to the intelligible forms of objects, if indeed these *eidē* are in some ways distinct from thinking itself and not generated by it. Then, however, *nous* would be a permanent potentiality rather than substantially active, and hence it would be nothing at all: the intellect is "potentially all thoughts, but actually nothing until it thinks."[64] It looks as if Aristotle is facing a major challenge—maybe he wants to have his cake and eat it, too.

In Hegel's reading, the paramount distinction between Aristotelian sensing and thinking is that, while sensible forms are not produced by the corresponding activity, intelligible forms are. At least as regards human thinking, Aristotle seems to come close to agreeing: he reminds his audience that while perceiving is not "up to us," we can think "whenever we please."[65] But he goes no further than pointing out our independence to engage in thinking (or not). He does not say that this thinking contains or produces contents of its own. Hegel suggests that the core of the difficulty lies in the lack of justification of the double nature of *nous* as passive and active.[66] We are not told where this duality originates from. Short of declaring, because of active intellect's absolute impassivity, that the intelligible forms are unknowable in principle (thus entering the province of transcendental philosophy), absolute idealism's definition of speculative thinking may come to the rescue. Speculative thinking is the "form of forms"[67] in the sense that it is the universal Concept (*der Begriff*) of all particular contents, including particular concepts (*Begriffe*). The reason why the Concept is not affected or altered by its objects is that it is not ontologically equivalent to them. Hence it cannot "interact" with them. It subsumes them under itself. For example, in his refutation of mind-body interactionism[68] Hegel has explained that Spirit and matter cannot be said to be in a relation of reciprocity because they are not two particulars. They relate like a universal to a particular, i.e., like a concept relates to that whose concept it is. This is why soul and body do not interact: the soul is *the concept* of the living body.[69] The essence of speculative philosophy—the conceptual form of absolute knowing—consists of liberating knowledge from this kind of reification of concepts and its repercussions on thinking: "This knowing is . . . the *deliverance* from the one-sidedness of the forms and their elevation to the absolute form that makes itself into content [*die sich selbst zum Inhalte bestimmt*] and remains identical with it."[70]

The reasoning leading up to the Aristotelian passage at issue may be sketched as follows. The chapter's aim is to discover the characteristic feature and origin of thinking (its existence is not in doubt). At this point in the treatise we already know that thinking belongs to the soul but we don't

yet know whether it is separable or just logically distinguishable from her as a whole.[71] However, based on the preceding discussions of soul's feeding, perception, and imagination, it should be evident that thinking cannot be separated from these—or it would be the "activity" of a dead thing. Hence it can be only logically distinguishable from them. The following conclusion seems to impose itself (though Aristotle does not draw it here): if thinking differs from all other psychic activities only according to *logos*, then it is safe to say that it self-distinguishes from them. Like the *Ur-teilung* in Hegel's theory of judgment[72] (and not unlike the spontaneous self-division of live cells in nature), the distinguishing feature of *nous* turns out to be self-distinction.

## 4. Conclusion

Although Hegel may be reading too much (of himself) into Aristotelian texts, it is safe to say that Aristotle gives him excellent reasons for doing so. Aristotle's discussions of intellection fulfill for Hegel pivotal functions: they expose thought's universality; they disclose the inherently speculative character of thinking; and they point to the original unity of thinking in its passive and active states.

It is Aristotle who explains the universality of thought. He argues not only that perceptions cannot perceive themselves, but also that they cannot perceive thoughts. By contrast, thinking can think not only perceptions (and all other representations) but its own thoughts as well. This asymmetry is fundamental in Hegel's conception of *Denken* as "overgrasping" itself and its object.

It is again Aristotle (or Plotinus's "wholly Aristotelian" doctrine) who indicates the reasons why "speculative knowledge and its object are the same."[73] Outside their identity relation, the intellect and the intelligible are for Hegel incomplete notions. The very expression "I think" (or, in Aristotle's subjectivity-starved wording, "it thinks") is an incomplete sentence. Famous formulations notwithstanding,[74] "to think" is a transitive verb. Thought and its content are always given at once. If the distinction between thinking, its content, and its referent can be drawn only by thinking, then the latter in its receptivity is actually affecting itself: it is "receptive" yet also "impassive" intellect.

As for the original unity of thinking, the following is worth considering. Aristotle remarks that, contrary to perception, thinking lacks a particular organ.[75] This easily misunderstood statement may just be saying that no *specialized* organ is the *sufficient* condition for thinking (the idea that a brain in a vat would be capable of thinking is a myth Aristotle knows nothing about). It does not follow from this statement that all connection of thinking to life may be severed. Rather, the necessary condition for thought—human and otherwise—is always life. It is the unity of the living subject that makes thinking possible. For human thinking, it is the life of the natural soul; for divine thinking, the life of the intellect.

## Notes

1 Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (henceforth *Werke*), eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), Vols. 18–20, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 19: 451. All translations of Hegel's texts are mine.
2 The question whether hylomorphism and entelechism characterize Hegel's conception of reality as a whole—i.e., his concept of the Idea—cannot be addressed here. This essay focuses exclusively on the ontological foundations of live matter.
3 One famous exception is the translation discussed by Walter Kern, "Eine Übersetzung Hegels zu *De Anima* III. 4–5," *Hegel-Studien* 1 (1961), 49–58; and by Klaus Düsing, *Hegel und die Geschichte der Philosophie* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), Lecture Four.
4 Hegel, *Werke* 20: 468. For Hegel's use of *Vernunft* see note 26.
5 Geoffrey R. G. Mure, *The Philosophy of Hegel* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965); Frederick G. Weiss, *Hegel's Critique of Aristotle's Philosophy of Mind* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969).
6 *Enz.* §378. References to the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften (1830)* are keyed to *Werke* 8–10. For readers' convenience, the *Enzyklopädie* is cited as *Enz.* followed by section (§) number, R (Remark), or A (Addition).
7 *Metaphysics* Lambda 7, 1072b 29–1072b 30. References to the *Metaphysics* are keyed to Werner Jaeger, ed., *Aristotelis Metaphysica* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957). Citations use the standard method: book, chapter, and Bekker page and line number. Stephen Menn (private communication) has pointed out that the 1848–49 Bonitz translation appended by the editors of *Werke* to Hegel's untranslated Greek quote ("The god, we say, is the eternal, best living being") is better amended to "the eternal, best living thing, we say, is the god"; first, because "god" is nowhere the subject matter in this work, second, because gods were commonly defined ("we say . . .") as exceptional kinds of living beings, but attributing live being to god(s) was not.
8 D. Bachmann, "Hegel, G. W. Fr. System der Wissenschaft. I. Theil.," *Heidelberger Jahrbücher* I, 4 & 5 (1810).
9 Quoted by Carl Joachim Friedrich, introduction to *The Philosophy of Hegel*, ed. C. J. Friedrich (New York: Modern Library, 1954).
10 John N. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-examination* (New York: Allan & Unwin, 1958), 359.
11 John H. Randall Jr., *Aristotle* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 14.
12 Geoffrey R. G. Mure, *An Introduction to Hegel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940).
13 Klaus Düsing, *Das Problem der Subjektivität in Hegels Logik. Hegel-Studien Beiheft* 15 (Hamburg: Meiner, 1976); *id.*, "Hegels Begriff der Subjektivität in der Logik und in der Philosophie des subjektiven Geiste," in *Hegels philosophische Psychologie*, *Hegel-Studien Beiheft* 19 (Hamburg: Meiner, 1979); *id.*, *Hegel und die Geschichte der Philosophie* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983); *id.*, *Hegel e l'antichitá classica* (Napoli: Giammusso, 2001).
14 A further seminal study is Michael Wolff, *Das Körper-Seele Problem. Kommentar zu Hegel, Enzyklopädie (1830) § 389* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1992). See also Alfredo Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and *id.*, "Hegel's Aristotle: Philosophy and Its Time," in *A Companion to Hegel*, eds. Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur (Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).
15 *De Anima* Book Two, 1, 412a 17. Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. and ed. R. D. Hicks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907) (cited in the following as *De Anima*). I have slightly modified a few of Hicks's translations.
16 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 133 and 158.

17 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 153.
18 *De Anima* Book Three, 4, 429a 27–429a 29.
19 *Metaphysics Lambda* 6, 1071b 36–1072a 3.
20 *Enz.* §24.
21 *Enz.* §426A.
22 *De Anima* Book One, 5, 409b 29–409b 32; emphasis added.
23 *Enz.* § 337A, § 358 and § 355A, respectively.
24 *Metaphysics* Lamba 9, 1074b 30–1074b 35.
25 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 153.
26 See Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm* (Berlin: Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1854–1961), vol. 25, 928: "*Vernunft*—correct apprehension, taking up, but already in the oldest German . . . the faculty with which we process in ourselves the objects taken up, reflection."
27 Hegel, *Werke* 3 (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*): 24–27.
28 Hegel, *Werke* 3: 23.
29 *Enz.* §34A and *Enz.* §387A, respectively.
30 *Enz.* §388. Self-externality (*Aussersichsein*), or lack of inwardness, is Hegel's rendition of Aristotle's "infinite divisibility of matter" in *Physics* Book Seven, 8: Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, vol. 1, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 437–442 (Bekker 261b 26–2651 11).
31 *Enz.* §246A.
32 *Enz.* §388.
33 Cf. *Enz.* §§26–34 and 377–380.
34 *Enz.* §378. In the *Science of Logic* (*Werke* 6: 489) Hegel faults Kant for neglecting to consider "the truly *speculative* ideas of the concept of Spirit by ancient philosophers." Equivalent formulations are found in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, *Werke* vol. 19: 132–133, 145, 198.
35 For a different view see Ferrarin, 255: the study of the "living being" in *De Anima* is "closer to the medical-naturalistic than to the religious," and *De Anima* is "the culmination of the philosophy of nature from which the chapters on *nous* alone are excluded." Mure, Weiss, and Wolff object to this sharp distinction of the study of nature and of thought as unsuitable for the interpretation of ancient philosophies.
36 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 209.
37 *De Anima* Book Two, 1, 412b 6–412b 9.
38 *De Anima* Book Three, 3, 429a 10–429a 23.
39 Hegel explains the terminology of "subjective" and "objective" in relation to Spirit in *Enz.* §385A: "As long as Spirit relates to itself as to another, it is only *subjective* Spirit, issuing from nature . . . But [its] whole activity . . . is directed toward grasping itself as itself . . . Once it has achieved its own being-for-self, it is no longer only subjective, but *objective* Spirit." The upending of both terms is explained in *Enz.* §387A: "One could say both that Spirit is first objective and shall become subjective, or conversely . . . The difference is not to be seen as rigid . . . Spirit must be grasped as idea, a unity of what is subjective and objective."
40 See *Enz.* §391.
41 *Enz.* §392.
42 I use throughout feminine pronouns for "soul" in order to avoid ambiguities. See, e.g., *Enz.* §389A: in the animal, the soul is omnipresent in all points of "her" (*ihre*) corporeity; but Petry translates that the soul is omnipresent in all points of "its" (the animal's or the soul's) corporeity: Michael Jon Petry, trans. and ed., *Hegel. Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* (Dordrecht/Boston: Reidel, 1978), vol. 2, 13.
43 *De Anima* Book Two, 3, 414b 18–414b 19.

44 *Enz*. §34A.
45 *Enz*. §299.
46 *Enz*. §353. *Reproduktion* in the Philosophy of Nature refers to the *Gestalt*-reproducing capacity of living bodies, not to species-reproduction (*Geschlechtsverhältnis*).
47 *Enz*. §402R.
48 *Enz*. §402A.
49 Wolff calls "hylomorphism" *ein Verlegensheitwort*, a word to help one out of embarrassment (see Wolff, 145). A thorough discussion of Aristotle's hylomorphism and its explanatory limits is: Stephen Menn, "Aristotle's Definition of Soul and the Programme of the *De Anima*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 22 (2002): 83–139. I give a qualified defense of the use of this term for Hegel in Allegra de Laurentiis, "Hylemorphism and Hegel's Account of the Soul," *Jahrbuch für Hegelforschung*, ed. Helmut Schneider (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2017), 247–265.
50 *De Anima* Book One, 1, 403a 25.
51 These "empirical" themes from Hegel's Anthropology cannot be discussed here. I treat them in Allegra de Laurentiis, "Sentience and Feeling in the *Anthropology*," in *Palgrave Hegel Handbook*, eds. Marina Bykova and Kenneth R. Westphal (London, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), forthcoming; and *id*., "Derangements of the Soul," in *Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit: A Critical Guide*, ed. Marina Bykova (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), forthcoming.
52 *De Anima* Book Two, 1, 412a 20–412a 21.
53 *De Anima* Book Two, 1, 412a 27.
54 *Enz*. §391.
55 *Enz*. §549.
56 As mentioned in the Introduction, neo-Platonist conceptions of the identity of knowledge and its object that frame Hegel's Aristotle-interpretation cannot be discussed here. For a thorough examination of this identity in Plotinus see Stephen Menn, "Plotinus on the Identity of Knowledge with its Object," *Apeiron* 34 (Sept. 2001): 233–246.
57 *Metaphysics* Lambda 7, 1072b 13–1072b 22.
58 *De Anima* Book Three, 4, 430a 2–430a 5. Among *De Anima*'s English translators, Hicks alone (I believe) renders *epistēmē hē theōrētikē*, like Hegel, with "speculative knowledge" (though he translates the *Metaphysics*' *theōria* with "contemplation"). Joe Sachs, *Aristotle's On the Soul and On Memory and Recollection* (Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press, 2001) translates it with "contemplation" but specifies it as an active sort of contemplation, a "being-at-work" of the intellect.
59 *De Anima* Book Three, 4, 429a 15.
60 *De Anima* Book Three, 4, 429b 2–429b 3.
61 Aristotle discusses these in *De Anima* Book One, 2, 403b 2–404a 31, and Book Three, 3, 427a 17-b 7.
62 This is also Hicks's interpretation: Hicks, 236.
63 *De Anima* Book Three, 5, 430a 15–430a 18.
64 *De Anima* Book Three, 4, 429b 30–429b 31.
65 *De Anima* Book Two, 5, 417b 24.
66 In fairness, Aristotle does justify this duality through an analogy with art and its material, and by an appeal to nature: "in the whole of nature," thus "also in the soul," to every potentiality corresponds some agent that makes it actual (*De Anima* Book Three, 5, 430a 10–14). But this is insufficient, for Hegel at any rate, to explain what follows. The capacity of the intellect to think itself is introduced at *De Anima* Book Three, 4, 429 b9 with the words: 'And then it itself is capable of thinking itself.'

67 Compare *De Anima* Book Three, 8, 432a: "*ho nous eidos eidōn*" with *Enz*. § 2: human "thinking *as form*" must be distinguished from our several representations as "forms."
68 *Enz*. §389A and Kehler manuscript translated in Petry, 17–18.
69 See *Enz*. §§388, 389.
70 *Enz*. §573.
71 See *De Anima* Book Three, 4, 429a 11–429a 12.
72 German translators of Aristotle's *krinein* use *urteilen*. For Hegel (see the *Science of Logic*'s doctrine of judgment: *Werke* 6: 335–337) a categorical judgment of necessity does not synthesize contingently connected elements (as in "this subject *has* that predicate"), but it makes explicit through the copula the identity in being of subject and predicate ("this subject *is* this predicate").
73 *De Anima* Book Three, 4, 430a 4–430a 5.
74 Kant's "I think" (that must accompany all representations) (*Critique of Pure Reason* B 132) means "I think . . . X," as there is no thinking without contents, no concepts without intuitions. Descartes's "I think" is "immediately" a thinking of thinking. On Hegel's speculative interpretation of the *cogito* see de Laurentiis, "Hylemorphism and Hegel's Account of the Soul," 259–265 (section IV).
75 *De Anima* Book Three, 4, 429a 26–429a 27.

# 9 Parts and Souls

*Antón Barba-Kay*

*Are passions, then, the pagans of the soul?*
*Reason alone baptiz'd?*

—Edward Young

*In man, everything converges into the form that he has now.*

—Herder

## 1. Introduction

Do souls have parts? The question has gotten a little stale. Not only is "soul" bound to sound quaint or pious outside ancient philosophy seminars, but the thought that it has distinct parts immediately raises familiar headaches about their coherence, interaction, and relation. The very term "soul," as Descartes objected, seems to confuse the issue by suggesting something both separate from the body and yet quasi-corporeal, like a tenuous wind or fire pervading our limbs.[1] Both the Kantian red cards subsequently shown to psychologism and paralogism, as well as the eliminativist challenges of the natural sciences to the substantial distinctness of human reason, have each bequeathed to us a situation in which the attribute "rational" does not sit well with the animal it once qualified, nor with the attribute "ensouled."

This is an admittedly gross generalization, given that versions of Aristotelian naturalism have been enjoying a healthy post-Wittgensteinian second sailing. However, the question of whether and how rational psyches are internally differentiated nonetheless deserves to be regarded as a living one for two further reasons. First, as Matthew Boyle has argued in two recent papers, *de facto* dualistic interpretations are more pervasive than is usually acknowledged. Their diagnosis is made more difficult by the fact that they are no longer explicitly avowed, so much as allowed to enter through the back door of an array of post-Kantian positions that allow us, say, to "step-back," survey, and more or less impartially reflect on whether or not our desires should count as our own.[2] I would go so far as to add that dualism is bound to exert a permanent attraction on post-Kantian philosophy,

inasmuch as it inherits some version of the defensive perimeter between purely autonomous reasons and pathological, natural, or physiological ones. More generally, however, the question of whether the soul has parts cannot be untangled from the question of the relation between our freedom and our natural capacities—a question that is insoluble, Hegel argues, so long as continues to be badly formulated, as it still largely is. Even if it is not the view of most philosophers of mind, the early modern dualism of reason and the passions remains the premise of most contemporary research in psychology and the social sciences. Similarly, all my students will admit to having a body, even as they will insist that it is a matter of faith whether or not they are possessed of souls. A picture of the doubled self still holds most of us captive, and it is a version of the same picture that confronted Hegel.

If Aristotle has provided the inspiration for new articulations of naturalism, his importance in this regard was first fully registered within the post-Kantian context by Hegel. Hegel's general affinity with Aristotle's view of the embodied psyche is so well documented as to need little introduction. We know that Hegel made a thorough study of the works of Aristotle in the middle of the first decade of the nineteenth century (his translation of *De Anima* III.4–5 has survived from that period),[3] that by 1810 he had already been tagged by his contemporaries as the "German Aristotle" (in Platonic contrast to Schelling), and that he resumed serious study of Aristotle in the 1820s.[4] He wrote in the 1827 *Encyclopedia* that Aristotle's books *De Anima* are "still the most admirable, perhaps even the sole, work of speculative interest on this topic."[5] But while there are other such commendations of Aristotle in Hegel's work, this one acquires specific interest in the immediate sequel, where he goes on to criticize the view that the mind is a material thing possessed of fixed attributes, or discrete characteristics. Given that Aristotle himself does seem to divide up the soul into parts in more than one of his works, it is remarkable that Hegel does not attribute that view to him (a fact corroborated by his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*). I would like to sketch some of the senses in which I take Hegel's view to follow Aristotle's lead, showing why the former found in the latter a congenial pattern for the rational integrity of the human soul, even as they would seem to hold different views on the question of whether it has parts. In sum: I mean to say how both Aristotle and Hegel realized that the question of substantial dualism is different in kind from the question of psychic parts. Their positions are by no means identical, but they continue to provide us with the best (and perhaps the only) philosophical response to why the phrase "rational animal" is not an oxymoron.

## 2. Hegelian Moments

Hegel's main foil throughout the Philosophy of Spirit is not, of course, a view of the soul as having parts, but the Kantian scission of reason from nature.[6] Hegel thus freely helps himself to what would seem to be the bald empirical givens of human anthropology, physiology, pneumatology, and psychology—race, age, sleep, the five senses, madness, memory, and so

forth—even as he continually rejects the interpretation that those givens are heteronomous with respect to our rational capacities. As one battle within this much larger conflict, however, Hegel makes sure to distinguish his description of spiritual capacities from the view that we have anything like fixed and discrete mental faculties or parts. I will briefly indicate the tenor of his objections, before describing how his approach aims to remedy the faults of that position.

First, Hegel makes the familiar anti-psychologistic argument—one he had already laid out in detail in Chapter 5 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*—that empirical psychology traffics in "*facts* of human *consciousness*, merely as *facts*, just as they are *given*."[7] This sounds very much like an echo of the Kantian position, except that Hegel then singles out the Kantian philosophy itself as the offender. This remark is, in turn, rooted in his earlier criticism that empirical accounts present cognitive functions as a "mere aggregate of independent forces, each of which only interacts with others, hence. . . [being] only externally related to them"[8]—once cognition has been partitioned into a buffet of assorted powers, that is, there can be no way of accounting for their unity. The treatment of such parts precisely as given parts, as distinct modules, prevents them from being incorporated into one formal whole.

Hegel further clarifies his ascription of this position to Kant by adding that within accounts that distinguish among various faculties or powers of soul (separating, say, intelligence from will) there is an "indifference of content to form."[9] A psychological capacity is properly intelligible only with respect to a rational whole, he continues; whereas in accounts vitiated by empiricism any such capacity is presented as a contingent, readymade, "fixed and separate" datum.[10] Hegel had stipulated earlier that a mark of such a unified account is that the parts of such a whole must be deduced from it logically rather than observationally: our mental capacities should be presented as derived from the concept of Spirit "so proving the necessity that in Spirit there are just these faculties and no others."[11]

This last claim sounds at odds with the *Encyclopedia*'s supposed responsiveness to empirical discovery—and it may occasionally require more of us than we might be inclined to stomach (e.g., by following Aristotle in claiming that it is by rational necessity that we have "no more, no fewer" than five senses, at §401). But in general it may be seen how both these sets of criticisms I have noted (against empiricism and formalism) are aspects of a single train of thought. In brief, then: our psychic faculties are intelligible as spiritual only when contextualized within an account of how they are mutually constituted in light of their rational order, how each is implicated in the overall form of activity as a whole, where the alternative empiricist account cannot prevent them from devolving into incoherent, open-ended variety. In other words, empiricism is a *descriptive* confusion, rather than a category mistake. It is not that it introduces extraneous material, but that it treats its material as extraneously related to its governing form—as a "soul-thing only externally related to the body," rather than as "pure activity."[12]

If Hegel mentions Wolff, Fichte, and Kant among the empiricist offenders he has in mind,[13] it is only because he takes them to come in for a larger, wholesale family of criticisms that had been on his mind from the early 1800s. As he had argued at length in *Faith and Knowledge*,[14] Kant's and Fichte's views of cognition, by virtue of opposing (or at any rate seeming to oppose) an apperceptive, self-determining "I" to a dogmatically encountered "other," continue to be hobbled by an unacknowledged dependence on observational or merely given facts.[15] But it is easy to see how one could extend this criticism to most all classic early modern accounts, insofar as they entail (a) the notion that psychology should consist of the taxonomic identification and classification of the parts, passions, and faculties of the soul (as in Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, Locke); (b) the assumption that there could be a position of privilege from which the mind's eye could transparently survey the scope of "our" psychic capacities (as in Hume's pronouncement that "the mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance");[16] and (c) the impossibility of *rationally* settling conflicts between different such psychic modules, as a consequence of their substantial independence from each other (as in Hume's or Hobbes's view of the conflict between strategic reasoning and the passions, between justifications and their motors)[17]—such intra-psychic conflicts, by virtue of being mechanically formulated, can be resolved only through the repression or subjugation of one part by another. All three of these familiar issues are contradicted within Hegel's exposition of Aristotle in the *Lectures*[18] on the grounds that they are subject to insuperable difficulties. Hegel reiterates the point that within such accounts empirical matters of fact are being allowed to pose as properly "speculative" (or rational) first principles.

The big (or rather the biggest) question is then how Hegel proposes to analyze our physiological and psychological capacities, in such a way that their naturally bodied characteristics are construed as not "merely" vitiated by the bad empiricism he is committed to oppose, while avoiding a frictionless a priorism that, rather than explaining, explains away. What is the right account of psychic unity that does justice to its heterogeneity? For the purposes of my present discussion, it will perhaps be helpful to single out the two most significant ways in which Hegel's polemic against the notion of psychic faculties is consonant with Aristotle's: systematic holism and psychic integration. I expect that each of these will be familiar to the reader severally, even if their identity is sometimes overlooked.

Both aspects of Hegel's strategy are well summarized by a passage near the beginning of the Philosophy of Spirit in the *Encyclopedia*:

> The determinations and stages of the Spirit, by contrast [to those of external nature], are essentially only moments, states, determinations in the higher stages of development. As a consequence of this, a lower and more abstract determination of the Spirit reveals the presence in it, even empirically, of a higher phase. In sensation, for example, we can find all the higher phases of the Spirit as its content or determinacy.[19]

We have here, first, the reinterpretation of facts as aspects of an activity. This is the programmatic claim—in some sense generic to all of Hegel's thought—that what is merely determinate, given, and factual is formally inadequate to the task of giving grounds for itself. It is not therefore that the lower "determinations and stages" are merely falsifiable or omissible but that they are in some decisive respect *unintelligible* without the invocation of an additional principle of explanation (what goes by the name "sublation," in other words). Further, any such explanation will fail so long as it does not realize that there is a formal difference between facts and the orientation that renders them intelligible. Hegel is nowhere concerned with denying that empirical facts are *empirical*—as he insists throughout the Philosophy of Nature[20]—but rather that they are *brute* facts. The psychologistic failure is to beg the question by assuming that an atomic datum may precede the explanation, whereas Hegel is bent on showing how an explanation emerges from, even as it governs, the empirical facts it describes (which is why his account is relatively dependent on empirical findings, and relatively independent of the soundness of any one particular.)

This has recently been described as the bottom-up and top-down aspects of Hegel's approach.[21] One might summarize it by saying that Hegel thinks that the philosophical task of distinguishing our psychic faculties turns on the kind of question that generates it: if we are asking a question about the piecemeal interaction of faculties then (as seems to occur in the *loci classici* of Cartesian dualism) no good answer is possible, because heteronomy is postulated within the very terms we use to ask. Without a hierarchy of ends, conceptual anarchy prevails. But if we are asking how different rational capacities are made for each other (or not), then a "determination" may be understood as a "moment" ingredient to the end that mutually clarifies and overarches them. It is this point that prevents rational capacities from being reducible to physiological or material ones. We find here, in sum, a crucial point of agreement with the Aristotelian account of the soul: the unity of the human form is not intelligible as a sum of empirical facts, because it is primarily a functional form, a form of *activity*.[22] And I take it that the ambition of Hegel's work to be a system, a full circle, is ordered precisely with a view to this commitment.

This immediately raises the further question of the relation between the different elements of any such hierarchy—this is the second part of the strategy I take the passage quoted earlier to exemplify, with respect to the specific example of human sensation. Hegel continues:

> And so sensation, which is just an abstract form, may to the superficial glance seem to be the essential seat and even the root [*Stelle und sogar Wurzel*] of that higher content, the religious, the ethical, and so on. . . . But all the same, when lower stages are under consideration, it becomes *necessary*, in order to draw attention to them in their empirical existence, to refer to higher stages in which they are present only as forms.

> In this way, we need at times to introduce, by anticipation, a content that presents itself only later in the development (e.g., in dealing with natural waking from sleep we speak, by anticipation, of consciousness, in dealing with mental derangement we speak of intellect, etc.).[23]

The target in the first sentence is a position like Jacobi's or Schleiermacher's, which Hegel frequently attacks for demoting properly spiritual content to the level of feeling. But it is equally clear that he has no intention of *contrasting* the empirical to the rational; that he means his account to prevent the problem of faculty interaction from arising in the first place. The claim is that the relationship between higher and more basic spiritual capacities is not to be understood as additive (as if reason were layered on feeling)—it is not a relation in which reason monitors the heterogeneous input of the passions, or is solicited for response by them, or requires an additional motor faculty to make its decisions actionable. Rather, we should be able to say not only that the lower capacities in some sense already anticipate and contain the higher (i.e., that our intuitive capacities are responsive to intentional and conceptual purport), but also, conversely, that some modes of higher intelligibility are fully or partly sensible ones (easy to see in cases like art or religious ritual), or, more generally, that our conceptual capacities are given matter by and acquire form within the medium of sensible content.[24] As Hegel says in a later discussion: "*seeing*, and so on, is the concrete habit which *immediately* unites in one simple act the many determinations of sensation, consciousness, intuition, intellect, etc."[25] The unity of the act precedes distinctions about the relation between highest and lowest.

Hegel's formulations here thus suggest that there is neither a natural floor nor supernatural ceiling to his account of the rational animal. One should therefore hesitate to characterize his position as compatibilist or emergentist;[26] both of those terms may tend to suggest some fundamental heterogeneity of principles that are being reconciled or paired up with each other, whereas Hegel's approach is to refer to the rational form as enabled and constituted by the physiological capacities it exhibits. The Philosophy of Spirit makes clear that the descriptive coherence even of such everyday phenomena as human digestion, upright posture, waking, and maturation, may only be expressed within the order of reasons about what it means to be a human being doing those things.[27] The shift from factual atomism to systematic holism therefore obeys the same logic as the shift from psychic heteronomy to psychic unity: in both aspects of his approach, Hegel denies that what is taken to be known can be known in the terms in which it is supposed to be.

One could be forgiven, on the other hand, for thinking that this unitive or transformative approach (as Boyle calls it) renders any discursive distinction among our natural faculties so fluid as to be almost meaningless. Hegel multiplies psychic "layers" or "moments" or "stages" to a point where it is very difficult to keep confident track of an inexorably unfolding narrative

arc. And even if there is one, it is not identical with the role that "parts" play within Aristotle's account. In order to see why each approach differs so much on the surface while being so closely joined in spirit, I will first lay out what I take Aristotle's explanation of the parts of rational unity to be. I will then return to the comparison.

## 3. Aristotelian Parts

It is not easy to see from the outset what Aristotle means by "parts" of the soul, or what he takes the notion to commit him to, if indeed anything at all. Not only is he at ease presenting us with more than one, seemingly incongruous scheme of division—the one in the *Nicomachean Ethics*[28] is not in step with that in *De Anima*, for instance (and something like it, in fact, seems to be the object of Aristotle's own criticism at 432a27)—but in the latter work he more than once calls explicitly into question the very notion of psychic parts, emphasizing the attendant difficulty that a relation between two entirely heterogeneous components seems to jump-start a vicious regress.[29] He notes a further objection against the scheme in Plato's *Republic*, namely that each "part" of the soul would have to be actuated by a distinct kind of motivational volition, so that it does not make sense to assign appetite as such to a separate part.[30] More than the crude Pythagorean or materialistic accounts he dispatches in Book One, Aristotle's account of *energeia* thus understands psychic fragmentation as its primary foil, the account both closest to and farthest from his own. Like most of Aristotle's characterizations of his teacher, his reading of the Platonic passages in question is tendentious to the point of violence.[31] But it nonetheless clarifies the basic fact that Aristotle definitely does not hold to a mechanical view of the soul as comprised of independently modulated or bundled capacities. Such an account might at best laterally or "externally" coordinate such capacities, whereas the psyche, on Aristotle's view, is a single, subordinating form.[32] Minimally, it answers the question of "what such-and-such a body keeps on being in order to be at all."[33] Like the Hegelian account, however, its purpose is to shift the question from given parts to logically prior wholes. Living beings do not have souls, in this sense; rather, they are souls.[34] One might say that Aristotle regards body and soul as different parts of speech. The psyche is not simply a cause and source of life, but also an *end*, a distinct kind of living, temporal doing.[35] It is a unified activity sustaining and replacing itself. To be an organism is thus the task of organ-izing distinct capacities into one.[36]

If the foregoing is clear, we must then ask why Aristotle is intent on preserving a piecewise approach to our psychic capacities, as well as how he then proposes to account for their fundamental unity. It is important to note in this connection that, unlike in the *Ethics*, the controlling question in *De Anima* is about ensouled activity as such, about what is common to all organic forms. What is ensouled is minimally distinguished from the

soulless by virtue of being alive, and then four operative characteristics are singled out as marks of that activity: nutrition, perception, locomotion, and thinking.[37] This list of characteristics is generated according to the criterion that each is a self-sufficient, discontinuous category of organic life,[38] with the additional rider that there is a definite order of ascent (nutrition may be found without intellect, say, but not vice versa). Aristotle immediately qualifies the classification by adding that these functions are not separable within any *given* creature (the parts of the human soul "cannot be separate, as some people say, though it is obvious that they are distinct in speech"),[39] precisely because the relationship between soul and body is not an incidental one ("there is no evidence that any random thing admits just any random thing within it"[40] In other words, the parts of the soul are generic capacities that are only found concretely expressed in particular kinds of living beings; they are not free-standing relata.[41] The motivation for distinguishing these parts does not therefore entail an additional claim about their substantial independence from each other, even as Aristotle is clearly interested in the distinct "types" of soul into which natural organisms are conjugated, for reasons I will return to.

This raises the question (corresponding to the one I have raised concerning Hegel) of the relationship between the parts, especially whether and how intellect is present to and potentially separate from the others. And this is perhaps the single most vexed question in the history of Aristotle's reception.[42] However, while Aristotle lends ammunition to a dualist reading in passages that suggest the intellect's independence from its embodied articulation, for present purposes it will suffice to underline how he is likewise intent on denying that rational form can be substantially separated from its organic basis. Whatever the immortality of the intellect means to him, it is likewise clear (and arguably clearer) that he, like Hegel (and like Aristotle as read by Hegel), holds the view that the "same" parts of the soul may be spoken of only analogically across different beings. In other words, while we may speak of perception as being common to humans and other animals, Aristotle understands that the human capacity for perception is also only fully intelligible as *human* perception. He characterizes touch as the most primitive sense, for instance: it is the sense without which no other sense can be present. But he then makes the provocative observation that human touch (rather than any other sense) is much more discriminating than the touch available to other animals, and that it is precisely on that account that our intelligence surpasses theirs.[43] Being thickheaded or thick-skinned (or numbskulled) is a literal mark of stupidity. In other words, Aristotle views the "lowest" parts of the soul as formally constituted with respect to the "highest" capacity present in the organism. Just as he notes that sensation transforms nutrition into the power of appetite, and just as he notes in the *History of Animals* that reproduction must receive an entirely different formal specification when it is present in a moving animal rather than in a plant,[44] so it is that all the human parts cannot be understood except in

relation to the highest capacity present. "Rational" is not an accident of "rational animal," nor even one of its essential predicates, but a constitutive description of its very being.[45] Reason trickles down and spills up.[46]

It will perhaps be helpful to see how this works out in the same question we visited in Hegel's case, namely the question of the presence of rational discrimination within perceptual capacities. On a dualistic or additive view under which reason and perception were separable parts, perception would provide sensory input or stimulus that could then be monitored by reason or onto which rational form could then be conferred—as in, say, Descartes's position that perceptions themselves cannot be the source of error, so that we cannot go wrong so long as we abstain from judging whatever appears to the senses.[47] Aristotle seems to hold a similar view, when he says that

> sense perception when directed at its proper objects is always truthful, and is present in all animals, but it is possible to think things through falsely, and this is present in no animal in which there is not also speech.[48]

But Aristotle makes clear in the sequel that he does not think that "truthful" is applied univocally to animals and humans. He argues likewise in the *Ethics* and *Posterior Analytics* that the objects of noetic apprehension are both the most universal and the particular—the *perception* of the particular thus stands as a kind of immediate first principle, as the minor premise of a practical syllogism, rather than as the sensory *matter* or basis for one.[49] I take him to be reiterating this point in *De Anima*, when claiming that the object of perception is not a *quale*, as it were, but a properly rational object of apprehension. He distinguishes, for instance, between perceiving that the color of a man is white (which he calls "incidental," *kata sumbebekos*) and that this man is the son of Diares or the son of Cleon, which he refers to as a perception in its own right.[50] In both cases, the proper object of perception is not identified as "a man" (which would leave open the issue of whether or not the perception was properly rational), but by his patronymic, by his historical and communal location. That this is said to be a possible object of *perception* rather than of intellect or discursive reasoning makes it plain that Aristotle is not thinking of a two-stage process, by means of which perceptual intuitions are conceptualized. Hegel ascribes this sensory hylomorphism to him with approbation, saying that it "does not fall short of idealism."[51]

This issue then comes perhaps clearest to the fore in III.4, where Aristotle once more raises the question of the unity of intellect with the rest of the soul. He begins by observing that intellect must itself be without the attributes of what it knows, while also being receptive in potency to intelligible forms. The relationship between sensory perception and intellectual perception is then characterized as follows:

> It is by the perceptive potency that one distinguishes hot and cold, and the other things of which flesh is a certain ratio, but it is by a different

> potency that one distinguishes *that* it is flesh: either a separate potency from the first or else with the two having the relation a bent line has to itself when straightened out. Among the things that have being in abstraction, straightness is in its way just like snubness, since it is combined with extension; but what it is for it to be, if being straight is different from what is straight, is something else. . . . Therefore one distinguishes [*krinei*] it by a different potency, or by one in a different relation. So in general, in whatever way things are separate from their material, so too are the potencies that have to do with intellect [*ta peri ton noun*] distinct from one another.[52]

Aristotle backs off (twice) from conflating intellect with perception here, but the inseparability of the two is unmistakable: the identification of a given straight line cannot but rely on the intellectual capacity to identify straightness as such, but it is not reducible to it since perception gives access to *this* line, not to straightness in general. In the last sentence of the preceding quote, perception is spoken of as a potency *of intellect* (*nous*), and as present to it in the same relation that matter has to form. Intellect therefore appears both as a controlling capacity with respect to which the "matter" of perception is measured, and as an aspect informing any perceptive act. As Aristotle puts it earlier, at 426b21, it is possible to say that perceptual content bespeaks (*legein*) a certain content: a logical judgment "activates" the presence of an intentional order, the potency of which is already implicitly contained within human perception as such.

## 4. *Natur* or *Phusis*

The general shape of what I take to be Hegel's agreement with Aristotle is, I hope, more or less clear by now. Both reinterpret the separation between the rational and the natural as a difference in the kind of explanation offered, in what could come to count as a sufficient description of the phenomena, rather than as a difference internal to the phenomena per se. Both maintain a way of speaking about psychic capacities as coherent and distinguishable, but finally inseparable. Both understand intellect (or reason) not as a faculty, but as an organizing principle—a form of activity defined by a distinct end—that is logically prior to the possibility of analyzing the psyche into functions or parts. And in both accounts what is physiologically basic is argued to be all the while mediated by (and only fully intelligible in light of) such intelligent order. Neither the "passions" nor perception, as we saw, are irrational, but are instead answerable to and informed by reason. To the issue of whether the soul has parts, both Hegel and Aristotle answer, in effect, that it depends on the question that one takes oneself to be asking.

Rather than simply cheering for these similarities, however, it will perhaps be helpful to conclude by identifying the point at which the accounts may be said to diverge. I take it, for instance, that the heart of Aristotle's purpose in identifying the array of soul types in *De Anima* is not simply taxonomic, but

in a sense evolutionary. In his description of vegetable souls, for instance, he says that plants reproduce "in order to have a share in what is always and is divine," which he calls the aim of all living things.[53] Rational souls, by virtue of being able to contemplate the divine, can realize this desire more fully than plants, but that achievement is somehow continuous with the ends of every instance of souling forth, and so helps to explain the fact that rational souls must necessarily include every other lower tier within themselves: each "part" of the soul builds on (and thereby serves as a record of) the shapes previously adopted by its desire to overcome its own finitude. There is accordingly more at stake in Aristotle's division of parts than in Hegel's. The former takes himself to be noticing a distinction systematically spelled out by nature, while the latter takes himself to tracing a progression of logical (and therefore, as I noted, somewhat more fluid) distinctions. One might say that, for Aristotle, all life is constituted by the desire to become the life of the mind.[54]

This is not, on the face of it, uncongenial to the spirit of Hegel's encyclopedic approach—nature herself is said to be "petrified" or "frozen" Spirit,[55] which does seem to rhyme with Aristotle's view. It is true that "soul" designates a provisional and lower tier of Hegel's account of *Geist*—but then it is explicitly identified with the "sleep of *Geist*—the passive *nous* of Aristotle,"[56] which likewise signals continuity between the two accounts. But if *in spirit* Hegel's teleology of intelligibility is intended to eradicate a sharp caesura between different psychic principles, the contrast between natural and spiritual creeps back into *the letter* of his account in a way that suggests a return to the Kantian situation. Hegel still speaks as if natural determinations are such as to be sloughed off. For example: "the soul stands midway between the nature which lies behind it . . . and the world of ethical freedom which extricates itself from natural Spirit."[57] This is not an isolated remark: Hegel continues to speak as if natural determinations are something to be triumphed over, liberated from, and mastered[58]—rather than incorporated or assimilated. Even granting that these are passing characterizations, it is as if the opposition of natural capacities to spiritual ones nonetheless reasserts itself *malgré lui*.

Though this first shows up simply as a rhetorical difference between Hegel and Aristotle, it also has at least one doctrinal implication. It is precisely because the boundary between what is animal (or natural) and what is rational is not drawn in the face of skeptical worries about their confusion[59] that Aristotle's account of intelligent perception can more strongly emphasize the continuity between animal and human perceptive capacities: perceiving *that* we see and hear, for instance, is identified by him as an animal form of intentionality. Even in the *Ethics*, where the cut is made between the parts of the soul having speech and those that are "without speech," *alogon*,[60] the distinction is between that in us which is capable of bringing differences to awareness and those capacities in us which are not (rather than those which are simply *irrational*). This is why Aristotle's

scheme can handle intra-psychic tensions like *akrasia* that are not obviously spoken for in Hegel's account of the will.[61] Neither the Aristotelian tiered soul nor the Platonic tripartite soul is primarily mobilized to oppose reason to nature. I do not say that the ancient approach is superior to Hegel's, but it is surely worth considering the ways in which we sharpen our conception of autonomy at the cost of not even being able to remain animals.

On the other hand, one might wonder whether Aristotle's emphasis on organic continuity is not the very thing that then causes him to insist on the separability and immortality of the contemplative intellect. Whether this is incompatible with hylomorphism is a complex issue, as I have said. Hegel, for one, does not register the matter to be of much concern, glossing Aristotle's position with the observation that "Spirit repels matter from itself."[62] By contrast, Aristotle's motivation for insisting on it is not at all straightforward: the contemplative intellect transcends personal identity so that, by being all things,[63] it is in some sense able to share the activity of the *primum mobile* (the only other immaterial agent within Aristotle's cosmos). This is unlike the Hegelian reading that the Idea exists in me *as* a particular individual (rather than in spite of being one), and one might venture that it is precisely this ultimate gap between the natural and the divine as aware of itself that keeps Aristotle's account from being properly systematic in the Hegelian sense. It is revelatory, in this connection, that Hegel in fact concludes the *Encyclopedia* with the quote from *Metaphysics* Lambda about thought thinking itself.[64] The Aristotelian aspiration has been fully worked out into a sequence that does not break off at the top, so that the divine is not simply a pole star, but the answer to the rational animal's defining oracle, the challenge with which the Philosophy of Spirit begins: know thyself.

## Notes

1 René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Volume II, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 17, 114.

2 See Matthew Boyle, "Additive Theories of Rationality: A Critique," *European Journal of Philosophy* 24 (2016): 527–555, and "Essentially Rational Animals," in *Rethinking Epistemology*, ed. Günter Abel and James Conant (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012). Boyle is careful, in the former article, not to attribute the view he is criticizing fully to Korsgaard, for instance, but he shows how the temptation to it is present in her description of a rational agent's power to "step back" from her desires to act. I would add Frankfurt's notion of "second-order volitions" in his "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person" and Brandom's "The Structure of Desire and Recognition" as positions betraying of the same tendency. See Harry G. Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," *The Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1971): 5–20; and Robert B. Brandom, "The Structure of Desire and Recognition: Self-Consciousness and Self- Constitution," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 33 (2007): 127–150.

3 Alfredo Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 4–5; G.W. F. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* (henceforth GW), ed. Rheinisch-Westfaelische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Hamburg: Meiner, 1968—) 10.2: 517–521.

4 Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle*, 265. Chiereghin writes that there is already a Greek "atmosphere" to the 1817 *Encylopedia*. See Franco Chiereghin, "Das griechische Erbe in Hegels Anthropologie," in *Psychologie und Anthropologie oder Philosophie des Geistes*, ed. Franz Hespe and Burkhard Tuschling (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1991), 21.
5 Translations, unless otherwise noted, are from Wallace, Miller, and Inwood's rendering of the *Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), though I have replaced "Spirit" for "mind" throughout. The paragraph numbers correspond to those in the 1830 *Enzyklopädie* (GW 20), which I use as a default. (In the case of the 1827 *Enzyklopädie*: GW 19.) In this passage, the reference is to §378. (*Enzyklopädie* is abbreviated as *Enz.*).
6 Cf. esp. *Enz.* §410z.
7 *Enz.* §444.
8 *Enz.* §378.
9 *Enz.* §445.
10 *Enz.* §445; cf. §387.
11 *Enz.* §378.
12 *Enz.* §378; cf. on this point Greene's *Hegel De Anima*, 6–9.
13 *Enz.* §379z and §444, respectively.
14 See *Faith and Knowledge*, trans. Walter Cerf and H. S. Harris (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988), 67–75, 83, 159; GW 4: 325–331, 337, 391–392.
15 Cf. *Enz.* §456: "a mere spectator."
16 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), I.iv.6.
17 Cf. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), Chapter 8; Hume, *Treatise* II.iii.3.
18 G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (henceforth LHP) (three volumes), trans. E. S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), Vol. 2, 180–189; *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (henceforth *Werke*), ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), Vol. 19: 198–207.
19 *Enz.* §380, translation modified; cf. §408z.
20 *Enz.* §§268z, 270z; and cf. §406.
21 See, *inter alios*, Heikki Ikäheimo, "Hegel's Concept of Recognition—What Is It?" in *Recognition: German Idealism as an Ongoing Challenge*, ed. Christian Krijnen (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 11–38.
22 Cf. LHP Vol. 2, 183; *Werke* 19: 201–202 with *Enz.* §577.
23 *Enz.* §380, my emphasis.
24 See Sebastian Rödl's elaboration of this theme in *Categories of the Temporal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 1–15; and Aristotle's *De Anima* 432a7–432a8 (for the point that conception arises with perception).
25 *Enz.* §410z.
26 This is how Eldridge, e.g., characterizes Hegel's view in "Hegel's View of the Unconscious and Why It Matters," *The Review of Metaphysics* 67 (2014): 491–515.
27 Cf. Rousseau's observation that our teeth and intestines do not determine us as exclusively carnivorous or herbivorous, which, he suggests, is already a mark of freedom from instinct (*Second Discourse*; Part I, §3).
28 *Nicomachean Ethics* 1098a, 1139a.
29 *De Anima* 411b13–411b14.
30 *Republic* 432b7–432b8; Plato is anticipating versions of this objection in 436c—e and 439b of the *Republic*.
31 For detailed treatments of the Platonic view of psychic parts, see Michael Woods, "Plato's Division of the Soul," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 73 (1987): 23–48; Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory: The Early and Middle Dialogues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 191–193; Cooper, "Plato's Theory of Motivation,"

*History of Philosophy Quarterly* 1 (1984): 3–21. Cooper is particularly helpful in vindicating the usefulness of the tripartite scheme in the *Republic*, observing that the very notion of "parts" only makes sense against the background of some well-defined theoretical interest. (Like Aristotle, Plato provides more than one distinct scheme of psychic taxonomy).

32 "The soul has its thinghood [*ousia*] as the form [*eidos*] of a natural body having life as a potency" (412a20). Translations of *De Anima* are by Joe Sachs: *De Anima and On Memory and Recollection* (Santa Fe: Green Lion Press, 2001). The Greek text is from W. S. Hett's Loeb edition: *De Anima; Parva naturalia; On Breath* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957). Compare Goethe's comment: "The less perfect the creation, the more its parts are alike or similar and the more they resemble the whole . . . The more similar the parts, the less they will be subordinated to one another. Subordination of parts indicates a more perfect creation." "On Morphology," in *The Essential Goethe*, ed. Matthew Bell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 979.

33 *De Anima* 412b11–412b12.

34 Cf. *De Anima* 412b19.

35 *De Anima* 415b17.

36 Cf. Heidegger's discussion of this point at 234–235 of *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995) alongside *De Anima* 412b1.

37 *De Anima* 413b13.

38 *De Anima* 410b19: some animals are sessile (immobile, or fixed in one place). Locomotion receives a separate treatment later on (433a10ff.).

39 *De Anima* 413b30.

40 *De Anima* 414a25.

41 Hegel emphasizes this in the LHP Vol. 2, 185–188; *Werke* 19: 203–204.

42 The main fault line runs between the Averroistic view that the active intellect is separable and the Thomistic view of the fundamental unity of the human soul. See the excellent article by Anton C. Pegis, "St. Thomas and the Unity of Man," in *Progress in Philosophy*, ed. James A. McWilliams (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1955). It is undeniable that Aristotle's text makes several claims suggestive of a dualistic, or at least "additive," view of the relation between psychic parts: as when he suggests that the intellect may be unaffected by the passions of composite, mortal beings (408b19–408b20); that the intellect alone seems to admit of being separated from body, "as the everlasting from the destructible" (413b28); or, that "when separated [intellect] is just exactly what it is, and this alone is deathless and everlasting" (430a23). There is little indication, that is, that this active intellect is essentially connected to one's specific situation or identity. It seems, rather, to express the radical incommensurability between our own historical identity and what is intelligible *sub specie aeternitatis*.

43 *De Anima* 421a20.

44 *History of Animals*, Book Eight, 1. Cf. *De Anima* 414b20ff. and *Metaphysics* 1043b—1044a.

45 It is also the power of predication as such: the "form of forms," as Aristotle puts it in *De Anima*, 432a2.

46 "Rational" is not like "mammal" for Aristotle, as Boyle explains—it does not specify particular content, but a form of explanation of relevant processes ("Essentially Rational Animals," 16–18). See Aquinas, *Prima Pars*, Q.76, Article 1, of the *Summa*. As a consequence, one should properly say that the soul contains the body (i.e., makes it one) rather than the reverse (Q.76. A.3), as well as that the potential whole is in each part according to its entire essence, even if not according to its whole power (Q.77, A.1).

47 Compare Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, 15, and 21 ("do I see any more than hats and coats which could conceal automatons? I *judge* that they are men.");

and Leibniz, *Monadology*, §§14–24, where he argues that we can have perceptions without apperceptions. For the contrary view, see Spinoza's *Ethics*, Scholium to the Corollary of Prop. II.49.

48 *De Anima* 427b12–427b15.
49 *Nicomachean Ethics* 1143a35; *Posterior Analytics*, 99b20ff.
50 *De Anima* 418a20, 425a25.
51 LHP Vol. 2, 188; *Werke* 19: 206. Hegel at first gives the impression here that he thinks that there are two stages involved ("the influence from without, as a passivity, comes therefore first"), but he immediately clarifies that he is speaking of an "aspect" (LHP Vol. 2, 187–188; *Werke* 19: 205–206).
52 *De Anima* 429b15–429b25, translation modified.
53 *De Anima* 415a31.
54 Hans Jonas makes this point very well in *Mortality and Morality: A Search for Good After Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 59–74.
55 *Enz*. §247z.
56 *Enz*. §389.
57 *Enz*. §391z.
58 *Enz*. §387z, §410, §410z, §411z.
59 *Enz*. §381z.
60 *Nicomachean Ethics* 1102a32.
61 *Akrasia* is most striking because we are capable of having desires that are not fully "ours" and yet which are also somehow articulate (rather than brutishly heteronomous). Whereas, as Robert Pippin puts it: "Hegel's notion of the will is simply practical reason, and so his position is more Socratic—there is no weakness of the will." See *Hegel's Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 165; compare 152. Note that the term "will" within the standard translation of *akrasia* tends to distort the issue.
62 LHP Vol. 2, 191; *Werke* 19: 209.
63 *De Anima* 431b21–431b22.
64 *Enz*. §577.

# 10 On Contradiction

## Hegel versus Aristotle, Sextus Empiricus, and Kant

*Richard Dien Winfield*

### 1. Introduction

No principle has enjoyed more abject fealty in the annals of Western philosophy than the principle of contradiction. From Aristotle onwards, almost all philosophers have invoked this hallowed principle to support their philosophical systems, or to embolden skepticism of all systems. Whether identified in Aristotle's formulation[1] or in Kant's revision,[2] the principle of contradiction has yielded the same outcome: reason's search for truth has been banished from the territory in which contradiction is encountered.

For Aristotle, there are no regrets. The principle of contradiction is the fundamental first principle of reason, and only on its basis can philosophy achieve any positive results. For Sextus Empiricus, our refuge from dogmatic philosophy depends upon it. The principle of contradiction is the implicit foundation of his ancient Skepticism, which can thereupon confidently suspend judgment whenever argument can be shown to fall into contradiction. For Kant, the principle of contradiction is guarantor of both logical coherence and metaphysical restraint. Although the principle provides certainty of consistency, rather than truth, it saves us from following our natural inclinations to think the unconditioned and pretend that we could attain truth through reason.

Only Hegel calls into question acceptance of the allegedly irrefutable principle of contradiction. He suspects that any skepticism that depends upon it is not skeptical enough, whereas any philosophical system that pays it homage cannot possibly be valid.

### 2. Aristotle on Contradiction

The fateful embrace of the principle of contradiction finds its classic expression in Aristotle, who turns to it tellingly in pursuit of a first principle of reason. To know truth without qualification, Aristotle acknowledges, philosophy must be the freest, most sovereign discipline.[3] Instead of being captive to any particular condition or perspective, philosophy must uncover what is most universal and fundamental, for nothing can be comprehended in truth unless the philosopher grasps that without which nothing can be,

or be known. To overcome bondage to given phenomena and standpoints, philosophy must uncover that which is presuppositionless: that which is by nature rather than by convention; that which is immediate rather than mediated by some contingent condition. What is immediate can serve as an ultimate foundation for being and knowing provided it not only rests on nothing else, but is that from which all else emerges and is intelligible. The pursuit of presuppositionlessness in order to overcome all contingent mediation entails for Aristotle what he accordingly presumes to be the defining philosophical imperative of the search for a first principle: a privileged immediacy that is foundational. This can be the case only on the fateful assumption that immediacy can be something determinate and determining, rather than indeterminate.

Aristotle acknowledges the difficulty of uncovering a first principle, recognizing that it cannot be derived from any other factor without forfeiting its privileged foundational immediacy. Precisely because a putative first principle is not determined by anything else but is rather that immediacy mediating all else, there can be no deduction of it from any premises. The only avenue left for validating a first principle is the indirect path of somehow showing that it cannot possibly be disputed.[4] Aristotle advances the principle of contradiction as the first principle of reason because it alone supposedly exhibits this irrefutability.

In Book Gamma of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle presents his indirect proof of the principle of contradiction: "that the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect". There, he offers a two-pronged validation, addressing both being and discourse. The principle of contradiction cannot be repudiated because, Aristotle seeks to show, nothing can be determinate, nor can anything determinate be known, without this principle holding sway. Aristotle suggests that beings relinquish all determinate character without it, for if something can have and not have certain qualities, magnitudes, or relations at the same time and in the same respect, all things become indistinguishable. Instead of something possessing a nature and features that other things do not enjoy, everything is and is not what everything else is and is not. All becomes one, and that one has no determinable character of its own since it both is and is not what it is said to be.[5] Admittedly, Aristotle's principle refers to attributes as if they themselves were determinate, independently of whether the same subject can both possess and not possess them at the same time and in the same way. Nonetheless, attributes would similarly lose their own determinacy if the principle of contradiction were not applicable to their own specification, for unless each attribute is what it is to the exclusion of what it is not, all attributes become one and undifferentiated.

However, the principle of contradiction is not just an indispensable foundation of determinate ontology, but the basis of meaningful speech of any sort, including any denial of its own validity. Nothing can be determinately meant if the principle of contradiction is foresworn. Without it, any claim

would signify both its assertion and its denial, just as every term within any claim would mean both what it is and what it is not.[6] To repudiate the principle of contradiction would be a hopeless enterprise, for without the principle being valid, its denial would equally signify its affirmation.[7] It thus appears not only that nothing can be meant determinately without adhering to the principle of contradiction, but also that any argument against it must presume the principle's validity in order to deny it without not denying it.

In sum, the principle of contradiction is impossible to escape or deny because, allegedly, without it being true nothing determinate can be, nor be meant. Aristotle seems to have sealed his indirect proof and validated his first principle of reason in the only way possible. Its undeniability appears to prevail without depending upon deductive demonstration, whereas all further knowledge seems to rest upon it since any other claims can retain their identity only on its basis.

Nonetheless, the principle of contradiction does not offer any resources for determining what are the specific subjects and attributes that hold true. Since all the principle of contradiction does is certify that a subject can be only what it is and not what it is not, it provides no means for ascertaining how being and meaning become determined and what determinations they acquire. Even if determinate being and determinate meaning depend upon the principle of contradiction, it suffers from an empty formality that leaves it unable to deliver any positive determination of anything else.

Ontologically speaking, the principle of contradiction requires supplement by some other principles to provide being with any further determination. Although determinacy may be thought to depend upon it, the principle of contradiction itself appears to depend upon the presence of determinate beings with determinate attributes to which it can apply.[8] If, however, what is can be determinate only by being what it is and not what it is not, how can being develop beyond a self-identity indifferently applicable to each and every attribute and obtain any specific differentiated content?

Epistemologically speaking, the principle of contradiction empowers reason to do no more than think the formal identity of independently given contents by certifying them to be what they are rather than what they are not. If this principle is the sovereign rule of reason, reason can only attest to the consistency of externally supplied contents, but never validate their truth, nor engender new contents through reason alone. Reason is then condemned to be merely analytic, capable neither of providing any wisdom of its own, nor of connecting different contents to one another. It must hand over material "cognition" to the experience of phenomena, and restrict itself to exercises in formal logic and reflections on the consistency of empirical science, given ethical and aesthetic conventions, and linguistic usage.[9] Epistemologically, as well as ontologically, the principle of contradiction appears to be a dead end for philosophical investigation.

Aristotle does not fully acknowledge these ramifications and instead ties the principle of contradiction to specific ontological claims. He suggests that

attributing to substances only contingent attributes is tantamount to rejecting the principle of contradiction, and that this is done by those who reduce being to the becoming of sensible appearances, whose perspectivally relative flux has no abiding intelligibility.[10] Accordingly, it might appear that with respect to both being and meaning, subjects must have a necessary essence and that what occurs is never unqualified becoming but only change in the contingent attributes of substances.[11] In drawing these ontological corollaries, however, Aristotle invokes understandings of becoming, appearance, essence, substance, and intelligibility, without accounting for their provenance.

Presumably a first principle of reason should be something that can and must be known before anything else can be held true. Can Aristotle indirectly validate the principle of contradiction by appealing to the conditions of determinate being and of determinate discourse without presuming knowledge of something more than the principle itself? Must he already have in hand a theory of ontological determinacy and a theory of meaning? Moreover, whenever Aristotle points to the looming indeterminacies of being and meaning as indirect proof of the principle of contradiction, does he not depend upon the corollary principle of excluded middle, according to which something does or does not possess an attribute, with no other alternative? That any denial of the principle of contradiction undermines itself can validate the principle of contradiction only if either its denial or its affirmation must be true. Does the whole indirect proof thereby beg the question, presupposing the corollary of what it aims to establish?

## 3. Sextus Empiricus and the Principle of Contradiction

Aristotle may claim to anchor being and knowing on the principle of contradiction, but ancient Skepticism of philosophical wisdom also depends upon that same principle in order to suspend judgment of truth in deference to unquestioned acknowledgment of appearance and custom. Sextus Empiricus gives classic expression to this dependence upon the principle of contradiction by rooting the entire practice of Skepticism in uncovering how claims about what is and what ought to be can be countered by equally strong arguments to the contrary. This ceaseless unveiling of contradiction could testify to how both being and meaning irrevocably involve the unity of determinacies with their negations. Instead, Sextus Empiricus regards the recurring encounter with contradiction as sufficient reason to refrain from making any assertions pro or con. Although this suspension of judgment may serve the practical aim of producing the serenity of abandoned inquiry,[12] apprehension of equal opposing determinations fosters such abandonment only if contradiction is recognized to stymie any determinate knowledge. Sextus Empiricus and subsequent skeptics presume that Aristotle is correct in maintaining that allowance of contradiction destroys determinate being and meaning, undermining any normative assertions. On this basis, uncovering opposing determinations can suffice to paralyze judgment.

Sextus employs two broad tactics to bring every judgment about what is and what ought to be into opposition with its denial. One consists in showing how normative claims are relative to some particular factor, enabling contrary claims to arise relative to a different factor. Such factors include the type and condition of knower, the situation and state of the object, and the relation between knower and object.[13] On the other hand, Sextus examines the content of normative assertions and uncovers how that content can be seen to contain its own negation.[14] Instead of seeing this as verifying the unity of opposing determinations, Sextus regards it as preventing the opposing determinations from having any validity. Kant does the same when he considers how reason, in its quest to know the unconditioned, runs into antinomies. Rather than regard the opposing determinations as united in the nature of the unconditioned, Kant joins Sextus Empiricus in declaring both determinations invalid, leaving reason allegedly powerless to know anything that is not relative.[15]

Are Sextus and Kant accepting the principle of contradiction dogmatically? Without giving it unquestioned assent, can either happily resign himself to opining about conditioned appearances, suspending all attempts to get at the unqualified truth?

Sextus Empiricus's own critique of any appeal to a criterion calls into question his own reliance upon the principle of contradiction as the ultimate foundation of Skepticism.[16] Although Sextus claims to leave nothing unquestioned other than appearances, his skeptical practice relies upon the principle of contradiction as the final criterion for suspending judgment. If Sextus justifies that reliance upon anything else, he would be invoking some other principle whose affirmation has not been suspended. On the other hand, if he endorses the principle of contradiction immediately, that endorsement has no further basis than the sheer being that its affirmation shares with any competing affirmation. Whereas this dilemma leads Sextus to repudiate any reliance upon first principles and upon criteria in general, he ignores it in surreptitiously depending upon the principle of contradiction.

Sextus, like Aristotle and all his epigones, is in effect unwilling to confront indeterminacy and instead presumes that immediacy can somehow be determinate. The principle of contradiction is accepted by skeptics and dogmatists alike in order to escape the looming indeterminacy of being and meaning. However, their acceptance of it as the bedrock of their reasoning involves the fundamental blunder of any appeal to first principles or ultimate foundations—the blunder of ascribing some determinate being to immediacy.

This blunder undermines the whole enterprise of foundational ontology, which seeks to give being *qua* being some determinacy. The moment ontology attempts to attribute any determinate character to being, the would-be science of being falls into the confusion of conflating being as such with some determinate being.[17] Since being cannot be conditioned by any particular being, without ceasing to be being as such, being is unmediated.

However, being, as immediate, cannot have any determinate character, for the moment something is identified with being, everything else is deprived of being. Being is and can be nothing but indeterminate, which is to say that being is nothing and nothing is being.

Although thinkers since Aristotle have clung to the principle of contradiction so as not to abandon determinate being and meaning, Sextus Empiricus's critique of the criterion exposes how any commencement of thought or being with a determinate principle cannot help but be capricious. If philosophy begins with any determinate first principle of being or reason, everything that follows is tainted with the curse of arbitrariness. The fear of lapsing into indeterminacy by forsaking the principle of contradiction thus reveals itself to be a fear of truth.

## 4. Hegel's Account of Determinacy as the Thoroughgoing Refutation of the Principle of Contradiction

Hegel is the first philosopher to recognize that philosophy must begin with nothing else than what others fear the abandonment of the principle of contradiction will leave us with: indeterminacy. Indeterminacy, as that with which philosophy must begin, represents the overcoming of all appeal to first principles as well as to any determinate givens, whether they are determinations of knowing or of the object of knowing. It is only by beginning with indeterminacy that philosophy can make an absolute beginning, freed of the dual relativity of addressing some given content and some given form of cognition.

Beginning with indeterminacy, which frees philosophy from all determinate foundations, is equivalent to overcoming the opposition of consciousness—which, through its confrontation with the given, would imprison knowing in relativity, were consciousness the ultimate framework for cognition. Further, insofar as beginning with indeterminacy signifies philosophy's liberation from bondage to the principle of contradiction, it promises to emancipate reason from the empty formalism to which that principle condemns thought. Although beginning with indeterminacy might seem to confirm Aristotle's fear that only adherence to the principle of contradiction can make determinate being and meaning possible, what follows from indeterminacy is none other than the thoroughgoing refutation of that completely incoherent view.

Any attempt to ground determinate being and meaning upon a determinate principle, such as the principle of contradiction, patently begs the question of accounting for determinacy by presupposing a determinacy for its account. As Hegel recognizes, it is totally absurd to attempt to derive determinacy from any determinate factor. Determinacy can be accounted for only by generating determinacy without reliance upon anything determinate. In other words, determinacy can arise only from indeterminacy. Hegel shows just how this occurs in thinking through the logical development from being

to nothing, to becoming, and to determinate being. This development not only provides determinacy without taking any determinacy for granted, but thereby refutes the absurd claim that determinate being depends upon the principle of contradiction.

The initial moves from being to nothing to becoming offer no possible opportunity for any application of the principle of contradiction. Being has no determinate attributes to affirm or deny any more than does nothing. Being is indeterminate precisely because it lacks all such specification. As immediacy, being provides no determinate cause or principle for the emergence of any other term. Since any determinate content or determinate procedure for arriving at something else would be an utterly extraneous, arbitrary stipulation, what follows from being can only follow immediately, without any ground or intervening basis, and consist of nothing but the same absence of determinacy. Being is immediately nothing, just as nothing is immediately being. Neither being nor nothing has anything about it that could be susceptible to contradiction, let alone safeguarded from indeterminacy. Nonetheless, being that is nothing and nothing that is being together constitute becoming, and do so through nothing but their own indeterminacy. Once more, what follows does not depend upon any principle, let alone the principle of contradiction. Rather, becoming arises just as what being and nothing are in virtue of their own impoverished immediacy. Whereas being and nothing immediately comprise being-nothing as well as nothing-being, they together constitute a two-sided result that is irreducible to either being or nothing. This third term, becoming, accordingly consists in coming to be (nothing-being) and ceasing to be (being-nothing). Its emergence cannot depend upon the support of the principle of contradiction, let alone any other foundation, for it immediately emerges from what is itself devoid of determinacy.[18]

Although becoming is not a determinate being, but just coming to be and ceasing to be (nothing that is being, and being that is nothing), becoming provides all that is required for determinacy. Once more, there is no need or even any possibility of appealing to the principle of contradiction for securing the advance. The very absence of any attributes in ceasing to be and coming to be leads to their paralysis, for insofar as being is immediately nothing and nothing is immediately being, coming to be is immediately ceasing to be and ceasing to be is immediately coming to be. That is, the nothing into which being ceases immediately cancels that cessation by converting into being, just as the being that comes to be immediately cancels its emergence by converting to nothing. What results is a dual cancellation of the two sides of becoming, leaving being and nothing in an immediate unity. Being that is nothing reverts to being, together with nothing that is being reverting to nothing. They stand together in the form of immediacy, or being, since nothing else mediates their presence. They are both at hand: being with nothing, immediately, because nothing but their own indeterminacy makes the process of becoming come to a standstill.

Determinacy cannot be characterized by using any determinate specification, since that would beg the question. Determinacy can only consist of indeterminate components and that is why the being and nothing into whose immediate unity becoming develops are the necessary and sufficient constituents of determinacy. Contrary to the principle of contradiction, determinacy is none other than what both is and is not, being and nothing! Far from securing determinacy, the principle of contradiction blocks the constitution and intelligibility of determinacy.

As Hegel's *Science of Logic* shows in following out how determinacy gives rise to determinate being, the immediate being of the unity of being and nothing itself undergoes the same becoming that leads to determinacy, rendering determinacy a determinate determinacy or *something*.[19] Since being is nothing, the being of determinacy is equally the non-being of determinacy. Accordingly, determinacy involves both reality (the being of determinacy) and negation (the non-being of determinacy). The immediate unity of reality and negation, or of the being and non-being of determinacy, is determinacy that is *determinately*. It is not just quality, but *a* quality, that is, not just determinacy, but *a* determinacy or *something*. Again, the principle of contradiction cannot possibly play any role in accounting for a determinate being. Something has no attributes to affirm or deny, since they would be something themselves. Instead, something is nothing but what something other is not. However, that other, the *determinate* negation of something, is itself a something that is not what is other to it. Hence, something and other are each something and the negation of something (their other). Thus, not only does determinacy challenge the principle of contradiction, but so does each and every determinate being, every something or other.

## 5. Why Hegel Addresses Contradiction and its Principle in the Logic of Essence

Although Hegel may be our great emancipator from the principle of contradiction, he does allow it place in the Logic of Essence, where it arises in connection with the essentialities of identity and difference and where contradiction itself emerges as that into which the polarity of positive and negative develops.[20] It is of crucial significance that contradiction and its principle comes up in the Logic of Essence and not in the Logic of the Concept. The Logic of Essence develops all the categories in which some determinacy is posited by another, where determinacy is mediated by, or relative to some prior determiner. The Logic of Essence presents the categorial domain of foundationalism, of conditioned being, and it should be no surprise that its categories are those that Kant privileges in restricting knowledge to an "objectivity" of appearances that is conditioned by the transcendental structures of knowing.

The essentialities of identity and difference involve relations where an essence—i.e., a determiner of determined determinacy—is at one with itself

through contents whose independent existence it nullifies and incorporates. Self-identity here enters in as a relation wherein an essence is reflected in a differentiation that remains wholly internal to itself. As Hegel notes, self-identity can be turned into the principle of contradiction insofar as it involves a formal unity in which the specific content of self-identity's internal differentiation is left unspecified by how it reflects itself therein.[21] Just as the principle of contradiction applies to any content whose formal consistency can be affirmed, so self-identity never goes beyond itself in whatever content it is manifest. For this reason, self-identity involves *internal* difference, but a difference to which its unity is indifferent, even though it contains it. As a result, self-identical factors are diverse, owing their determinate being not to their contrast with one another, but through their reflection into themselves. That reflection, as formal self-identity, possesses a content that is itself fixed, lifeless, and devoid of subjectivity. Only then can it belong to formal identity, which contains its content insofar as the latter has a consistency involving no immanent principle of differentiation.

Whereas self-identity excludes any extraneous difference, contradiction arises when factors oppose one another, but undermine their opposing identities through their very opposition. Contradiction does subvert the terms it opposes, but it does not result in indeterminacy, as Aristotle and Sextus Empiricus suggest.[22] In order for contradiction to arise, determinacies must develop that are what they are through their very opposition, and at the same time cancel their opposition. The polar determinations of positive and negative provide just this relationship. Positive and negative fall into contradiction since their distinctive identities depend upon their opposition, yet in that opposition, they play indistinguishable roles. Whereas something may have indifferently many others, the positive has *its* essential other in the negative, just as the negative has *its* essential other in the positive. Neither can be without opposing its counterpart, yet in and through their opposition, each relates to the other in precisely the same way. Consequently, positive and negative eliminate their essential difference through their opposition, which collapses. Their contradictory polarity itself collapses, insofar as their self-annulling opposition results in a relation in which two factors have the same content, one as positing its other and again as being posited, as ground relates to what is grounded.[23]

Both self-identity and contradiction exhibit the two-tiered character of foundational determination, where determinacy is determined or posited by a determiner or positor. Self-identity does so by rendering difference something internal to its underlying unity, whereas the polarity that generates contradiction does so by superseding the equipollence of something and other with an opposition where one pole reflects itself in what is distinguished from it. What the entire development of the Logic of Essence shows is that none of these relations can sustain themselves as independent, immediate factors that could serve as ultimate principles. Instead, the relation of positor and posited continually undermines itself insofar as the positor

can play its determining role only by being in relation to what is posited. What is posited, as posited, effectively posits the determining character of its positor, such that the positor is posited and the posited operates as a positor. This outcome comes to a head in the final relationship of the Logic of Essence, reciprocity, which issues from causality.[24] Since a cause is a cause only by having an effect, the effect is the cause of the cause's efficacy. Cause and effect thus end up both being cause and effect of one another. Although this reciprocal relation makes each factor both cause and effect of its counterpart rather than of itself, their mutuality removes all difference between them, eliminating the distinction between determiner and determined. With this development, the logic of foundationalism eliminates itself, giving way to the logic of self-determination, where determiner and determined are one and the same.[25]

If universality and conceptual determination fell within the orbit of foundational logic, formal self-identity and the principle of contradiction might retain a stranglehold on reason. Hegel, however, recognizes, that the logic of self-determination is the Logic of the Concept, which signals that universality can be pregnant with content, that concepts need not be empty, and that reason need not confine itself to analytic labors of certifying the consistency of given terms under the governance of formal logic.

## 6. The Logic of the Concept and Emancipation from the Principle of Contradiction

The logic of self-determination is the Logic of the Concept because the universal, the concept as such, is a self-differentiating unity that is what it determines itself to be. Even the most formal universals, the abstract universal and class, have their constitutive identity only in and through their particulars, their instances and members, respectively. Without these particularizations, the abstract universal and class would forfeit their differentiated unities and become a self-identical unity. Moreover, their particulars must themselves be individuated to sustain the plurality preventing their collapse into the universal. If the universal had just one particular, they would be indistinguishable and the universal would revert to an immobile unity, losing its constitutive, encompassing, self-differentiating identity. The universal must instead involve both particularity and individuality, even though it is not reducible to any one particular. Particularity and individuality are both immanent to the universal, which is at one with itself only through these determinations of itself. By contrast, formal self-identity is indifferent to the content of its inner differentiation, which is why it can be governed by the principle of contradiction. Universality cannot be so governed, insofar as it carries itself over into the distinguishing character of its particulars, each of which it both is and is not since it pervades them all.

Moreover, even though the universal's particulars must be differentiated from one another and thereby be individual, their opposition cannot involve

contradiction, which would cancel their self-subsistence. The universal does not undercut their independent being and reduce them to posits of some ground. Rather, the particularization of the universal is its very own self, that is, its *self*-determination. Contra Platonism,[26] which treats the universal as an essence reflected in derivative deficient phenomena, for Hegel the universal has no being apart from its particularization, which is why that particularization is not inessential, and why the universal determines itself and not something else.

The self-determination inherent in universality is what enables conceptualization to be both synthetic and analytic at once. Because the universal is self-differentiating, concepts are not empty but develop themselves, generating new determinations whose synthetic connections constitute the very analytic identity of the concept underway determining itself. Reason can therefore provide synthetic a priori knowledge without having to rely upon something other than concepts. Although Kant recognized that philosophy depends upon the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge, his adherence to the principle of contradiction left him able to retrieve a synthetic a priori knowledge of conditioned appearance only by appealing to how sensible intuition and understanding connect in the constitution of experience. Hegel's Logic of the Concept demonstrates how reason can escape Kant's appeal to the given, overcome heteronomy, and determine itself. The universal's self-determining self-differentiation is what allows concepts to lay hold of objectivity, which, unlike conditioned appearance, is determined in and through itself. Precisely because objectivity is what is in its own right, it can be the proper object of truth and transparent to a reason whose autonomous development can think through the self-development of an unconditioned subject matter. Whereas a thinking governed by the principle of contradiction can never grasp what is unconditioned, a self-determining reason can think what is self-constituted.

Our emancipation from the principle of contradiction is crucial not just to thinking truth, but to doing right. Hegel makes this evident in the *Philosophy of Right*, where he underscores how universality involves self-determination by showing how the will is autonomous only by giving itself new determination that remains at one with its self-constituting agency. To determine itself, the will cannot just be what it is and remain caught in the immobile fixity ordained by the principle of contradiction. Instead, the will must negate its given determinacy and become what it is not, thereby achieving its dynamic identity as self-determining. In so doing, the will overcomes the empty universality of being unrestricted to any given content and resolves to act: taking on a new aim that is its own self-determination, giving the will a character it imposes upon itself, enabling the will to individuate itself. The will thus achieves self-determination insofar as it exhibits universality, particularity, and individuality.[27]

Only by having the same self-determining, self-differentiating character as the concept can the will escape the formal self-identity that plagues Kant's

application of the categorical imperative. Given its enthrallment to the principle of contradiction, the categorical imperative deprives volition of the immanent individuation on which freedom depends. As Hegel never fails to point out, the empty consistency that satisfies the principle of contradiction can apply indifferently to any course of action, provided no further limitations are surreptitiously introduced.[28] Willing achieves self-determination not in obedience to the formal self-identity of non-contradiction, but through the contrasting individuation of the exercise of rights, where individuals interact with one another, determining their own identities as property owners, moral subjects, family members, civilians, and citizens through particular entitled actions by which they differentiate themselves as autonomous agents.

In theory and in practice, only liberation from the tyranny of the principle of contradiction can secure the self-determination on which truth and right depend.

## Notes

1 "It is, that the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect." Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1005b19–1005b20, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle—Volume Two*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1588.
2 "Now the proposition that no predicate pertains to a thing that contradicts it is called the principle of contradiction." Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A151, B190, p. 279.
3 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 982a16–982a19, 982b5, 982b27–982b28, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle—Volume Two*, 1554–1555.
4 Aristotle writes, "the most certain principle of all is that regarding which it is impossible to be mistaken; for such a principle must be both the best known (for all men may be mistaken about things which they do not know), and non-hypothetical. For a principle which everyone must have who knows anything, he must already have when he comes to a special study. Evidently then such a principle is the most certain of all." See *Metaphysics* 1005b12–1005b18, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle—Volume Two*, 1587–1588.
5 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1007b19–1007b30, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle—Volume Two*, 1591.
6 See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1006a29–1006b31, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle—Volume Two*, 1589.
7 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1007b29–1008a1, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle—Volume Two*, 1592.
8 As we shall see, this dependency is reflected in how Hegel will address the principle of contradiction within the Doctrine of Essence, which presupposes the Logic of Being and its development of determinacy.
9 As I shall discuss, this leaves us with very much what Sextus Empiricus offers as the skeptical outcome of his application of the principle of contradiction.
10 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1009a16–1010a14, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle—Volume Two*, 1594–1595.
11 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1007a21–1007b1, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle—Volume Two*, 1590.

12 Sextus identifies this as the "end of scepticism" in Chapter 12 ("What is the End of Scepticism?"), of his *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 19–21.
13 These are addressed under the heading of the "general modes leading to suspension of judgement" in *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Book One, Chapter XIII ff., 21 ff.
14 Sextus proceeds to do this in Book Two of the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* by investigating "the statements of the dogmatists." See Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 151 ff.
15 See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, "The Transcendental Dialectic, Second Book, Second Chapter, The Antinomy of Pure Reason," A405/B432-A567/B595, pp. 459–550.
16 See "Concerning the Criterion" in Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Logicians*, trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), Book One, 29–37, pp. 17–19.
17 Collingwood points out this problem in R. G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 13–14.
18 Although the linguistic expression of how being is nothing and nothing is being and how becoming consists in both may avail itself of propositions in which subjects and predicates appear, the thought determinations themselves do not consist of judgments.
19 As Hegel writes, "Determinate being, however, in which nothing no less than being is contained, is itself the criterion for the one-sidedness of quality as determinateness which is only *immediate* or only in the form of *being*. It is equally to be posited in the determination of nothing, when it will be posited as a differentiated, reflected determinateness, no longer as immediate or in the form of being." See G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic* (henceforth SL) trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Humanities Press, 1976), 111. See also pp. 109, and 114–115. G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (henceforth *Werke*), eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), Vol. 5 (*Wissenschaft der Logik* I): 118; see also 115–116, and 122–123.
20 See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, Book Two: The Doctrine of Essence, Chapter 2: "The Essentialities or Determinations of Reflection," SL 408–443. Hegel, *Werke* 6 (*Wissenschaft der Logik* II): 35–80.
21 See Remark 2: "First Original Law of Thought," SL 413–416, and also Remark 3: "The Law of Contradiction," SL 439–443. Hegel, *Werke* 6: 41–45, also *Werke* 6: 74–80.
22 One might wonder whether the opposition of consciousness exhibits a contradiction that results in indeterminacy. Certainly, the self-examination of consciousness that is observed in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* ends up rendering subject and object indistinguishable, eliminating the opposition of consciousness and ushering in the indeterminacy with which philosophy proper can begin. This development, however, is not a logical development, nor does the systematic determination of consciousness, which Hegel provides in the *Encyclopedia* Philosophy of Spirit, lead to the annulment of conscious awareness, but rather proceeds to theoretical intelligence, which makes the opposition of consciousness its object, treating mental determinations as both subjective and objective.
23 As Hegel writes, "opposition is not only *destroyed* [*zugrunde gegangen*] but has withdrawn *into its ground*." See SL 434 (emphasis in original); Hegel *Werke* 6: 68.
24 SL 569–571; Hegel, *Werke* 6: 237–240.
25 Although Sextus Empiricus similarly exposes how causality turns into reciprocity, he fails to see how reciprocity ushers in self-determination because of his adherence to the principle of contradiction. See Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Book III, Chapter IV-V, 13–29, pp. 333–345, and Sextus Empiricus,

*Against Physicists*, Book I, 195–257, in Sextus Empiricus, *Against Physicists, Against Ethicists*, trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), 99–127.

26 In Plato's *Parmenides*, this "Platonic" view of the universal is itself mercilessly critiqued. See Plato, *Parmenides*, 131a-135c, in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 364–369.

27 See G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), §5–7, pp. 37–42. Hegel, *Werke* 7 (*Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*), 49–57.

28 See, for example, the Remark to §135 of Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 162–163. *Werke* 7: 252–253.

# 11 On Theory and Praxis

## Hegel's Reformulation of an Aristotelian Distinction

*Federico Orsini*

### 1. Introduction

Most recent interpretations of Hegel's idealism are marked by pragmatism, proposed as a remedy to the oscillation between two equally undesirable extremes. On the hand, there is the Scylla of a dogmatic metaphysics, taken as the "view of the totality of things as a self-referential super-mind whose thoughts need not and cannot go beyond itself."[1] On the other hand, there is the Charybdis of an allegedly exhausted analytic philosophy, enclosed in the ivory tower of its abstract sophistications, the material basis of which is all the while provided by the empiricism of common sense, and by the naturalism of the physical sciences.

The reason why pragmatism would allow us to escape from any kind of dogmatism, as well as from any idle theorizing, is that pragmatism is meant to counter the main temptation of foundationalism: building knowledge upon a single way of knowing or upon a single categorial framework. On the contrary, pragmatism has the ambition of setting up "a metaframework for explicating and assessing the different systems we employ for categorizing reality," on the understanding that thinking is not so much a matter of theorizing, as a practical engagement with our natural surroundings, while "being constantly in the service of human interest and needs."[2]

The aim of this essay is not to discuss the virtues and limits of any specific pragmatist interpretation of Hegel, but rather to take a step back from the contemporary debate itself, in order to reconsider Aristotle's tripartite division of human activity into theoretical activity, practical activity (i.e., action in the strict sense), and poietic activity or making. I will examine whether Hegel's concept of thinking can, or cannot, sublate this division. Indirectly, this evaluation of the Aristotelian background has a bearing on the position we might want to take toward any pragmatist interpretation, since it allows us to challenge some of the assumptions guiding the actual debate—such as the allegedly social normativity of thinking, the deflation of the metaphysical import of Hegel's process philosophy, and the alleged primacy of praxis over theory.

In what follows, my argument will proceed in three main steps. In the first place, I will investigate the Aristotelian criterion of distinction among three kinds of human activity: again, theory, praxis, and making. Second,

I will analyze the criterion by which Hegel reappraises Aristotle's distinction. Third, I will discuss whether and how Hegel's process philosophy provides a reconstruction of theory and praxis. By way of a conclusion, I will consider a significant difference between the motivation of Aristotle's *theōria* and that of Hegel's speculation or science (*Wissenschaft*), arguing that such a difference turns around Hegel's understanding of human being in terms of Spirit.

## 2. Aristotle on Theory, Praxis, and Making

As it is well known, Aristotle clarifies the difference between theory, praxis, and making in the sixth book of his *Nicomachean Ethics*. The context of Aristotle's classification is therefore the ethical inquiry into different ways of life, and into the distinctive character of ethical virtues with respect to the dianoetic virtues (prudence, art, intellect, science, wisdom). However, the criterion Aristotle uses in distinguishing between theorizing, acting, and making is hierarchical. In the last instance, it depends on the metaphysical distinction between perfect and imperfect activities.

This distinction is first grounded in the ninth book of *Metaphysics*, i.e., the book on the meaning of being as act (*energeia*) and potency *(dunamis*). Accordingly, the criteria for Aristotle's tripartition are: (a) the self-purposive character of the activity; and (b) the transformation of the object addressed by the activity. The first criterion demarcates praxis from making, while the second discriminates theory from praxis.

The first criterion is tied to the distinction between perfect and imperfect activities. An activity is perfect when its aim is the activity itself and the time of the activity is indifferent, since perfection does not imply a transition from a state of rest to a state of movement, but rather a simultaneity between the perfect tense and the present tense. An activity is imperfect when it has its aim outside of itself, so that its beginning and its end are separated by a lapse of time. This does not mean that time does not exist for perfect activities, but rather that perfect activities are independent of time, because they are complete in every temporal moment, so that no instant is qualitatively different from the others. Imperfect activities depend on time, since they are not accomplished until the moment has come in which the aim is attained, and this moment is qualitatively different from all the other moments or parts of time that composed the succession of acts.

Theory is a perfect activity insofar as it is not exercised for the sake of something other than itself. In this sense, it is the most desirable way of life for human beings, since theorizing fulfills what is most divine in our souls, the *nous*. Only theoretical sciences will suffice here. Practical and poietic sciences are, first of all, means for the realization of the right praxis (i.e., the exercise of ethical virtues and the architectonic activity of establishing laws and ruling the political community), although there is one kind of praxis, philosophy, that might eventually allow for the study of ethics and the arts for the sake of knowing.

The same criterion explains the subordination of making to ethical praxis. Making is a goal-directed activity exercised on a material that is partially dependent[3] on the maker, with the aim of transforming the material into a work which lies outside the maker and, at the same time, bears the form that was thought in advance by him. Since the way of life of the maker is intelligible within the communal life of the *polis*, the existence of technical products or works only makes sense if they can be used in praxis. Praxis enjoys a primacy over making, because the internal finality of praxis is freer than external finality of making, and the human being is superior to his products as the end is superior to the means.

As far as the second criterion is concerned, theory doesn't change anything, but is rather an activation of the intellect as it takes up the preexisting forms of all that can be thought. The only "change" that occurs in the human intellect is the actualization of its potentiality. But this is not properly a change, since change is a process that presupposes the duality of form and matter, whereas neither the passive nor the active *nous* involve matter. On the one hand, theory is a form of action, since theorizing is a way of life whose possibility can be practiced by a few human beings on the condition of their having been freed from the most basic necessities of survival. On the other hand, theory is distinguished from action in the strict sense, i.e., from the exercise of ethical virtues forming the subject matter of the practical sciences (ethics and politics).

There are two reasons why action in the strict sense is not a perfect activity. First, ethical praxis involves transformation, and therefore process or movement. Second, praxis is certainly pursued for its own sake (otherwise it would be a *technē*), but even the structure of "being for its own sake" presents an internal hierarchy. Thus, the supreme achievement of practical life is not the practical way of life itself, understood as the exercise of the ethical virtues and of the dianoetic virtue of prudence (*phronesis*) which makes them possible, but rather the theoretical way of life, consisting in the actualization of what is divine in us.

Ethical praxis or action is an imperfect activity because it involves transformation. In order to be exercised, action needs a substrate, and this substrate is the human being, considered as a substance composed of matter (body) and form (soul). The latter is internally articulated in appetite (*orexis*) and intellect (*nous*). The goal of action is the formation of character, and character is the habit by which an agent causes determinate choices in accordance with practical reasoning or deliberation. Character is neither from nature nor against nature; rather, it is the result of education, a process that requires a certain amount of time—time for the agent to grow from infant to adult. Also, it depends upon the availability of living models of wise people in order to set up a wise relation between appetite and intellect, so as to transform a natural disposition or potency into a self-aware disposition in order to pursue rational ends.

To be sure, once education is completed, the result becomes disengaged from the process and the right praxis could be said to be a perfect activity,

insofar as the successful exercise of an ethical virtue constitutes an end in itself. However, even this "second nature" is subject to the relation of the body to the soul—and no ethical virtue, taken for itself, fully actualizes the first final cause of the human being (i.e., happiness). At best, prudence and ethical virtues are means that potentially lead to happiness, but not in the sense that they are tools or external means. On the contrary, ethical virtues are ingredients and necessary stages of human development or flourishing.

Summing up, Aristotle's distinction between theory and praxis is not a rigid opposition, but a relation of axiological subordination. Theory stands to praxis as a perfect activity to an imperfect one. The end is superior to the means, because the end is the cause of the whole practical process, and also what first justifies the means as a path to the end.[4]

## 3. The Reconstruction of Aristotle's Tripartition in Hegel's Philosophy

In order to approach the issue of what happens to Aristotle's tripartite distinction within Hegel's conception of objective thinking, it is good to keep in mind the following questions: (a) What is the criterion of Hegel's reformulation of theory and praxis?; (b) Does Aristotle's tripartition end up being dissolved or does it survive in Hegel's conception of thinking?; and (c) How does Hegel rebuild the meaning of theory and praxis in the light of a new criterion?.

It must be observed that a clear-cut, univocal answer to the second question is made difficult by the crucial ambiguity of the idea of tripartition itself, which could mean that we are dealing with a horizontal division between species internal to a common genus, or with a vertical relation of succession, ruled by a hierarchical priority of end over means, of the most excellent over the most necessary. Aristotle clearly has in mind the second option. We will see the extent to which Hegel embraces, however, the first option.

### *3.1 Hegel's Criterion: Objective Thinking as Absolute Self-Production*

Riedel's studies of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*[5] and Ferrarin's comprehensive examination of Hegel's appropriation of Aristotle[6] have persuasively shown that the relation of theory to action, as well as the traditional distinction between *praxis* and *poiēsis*, are radically transformed by a deep shift in the meaning of "production."[7] This ceases to be merely a poietic activity—a subordinated activity of making, consisting in transferring form upon an external material—and becomes the self-determining activity of thinking: an absolute form which spontaneously generates or produces its own content.

Spontaneity as self-productivity is the clue necessary to understand Hegel's original conception of "objective thinking" (*objektives Denken*) in *The Science of Logic*, the formulation of which is meant to challenge the modern conception of thinking as the exclusive possession of a mind opposed to an

"external" world.[8] We can distinguish between a negative and an affirmative side to Hegel's conception of thinking.

The negative side means that thinking is "objective" insofar as it is not reducible to (a) a psychological process, or to (b) an instrument to be "applied" to what goes on around us in the world, or to (c) a determinate product of some kind. The problem with every mentalistic or pragmatist conception of thinking, the reason why every such conception falls prey to skeptical objections, is that it ends up making *Denken* into a finite "something" or into a property of finite beings like us. For Hegel, by contrast, what is distinctive about thinking is its unboundedness or infinity, in the sense that thinking is not necessarily restricted to the pattern of a determined reference to identifiable objects on the part of self-conscious subjects. Even more interestingly, thinking's infinity should not be understood as some kind of "super mind," or as a transcendent ground existing apart from or prior to finite thinking. Rather, for Hegel thinking is an immanent *process* that must account both for the genesis of the standpoint of finitude and for its own internal dissolution.

The affirmative side, on the other hand, is the presentation of thinking as Idea, as the unity of subjectivity (concept) and objectivity (being) in process, and the understanding of the Idea as an absolutely immanent movement which can only be adequately described as a circulation. Insofar as it is absolutely immanent, Idea has nothing outside it, no external criterion according to which it may be judged. Insofar as it is the circulation of itself, the beginning and the end of the Absolute Idea have to become one and the same. This does not have anything to do with the temporal repetition of a fixed starting point, but rather with the way we have to understand the full meaning of the *Science of Logic*: the same *logos* that permeates reality (i.e., nature and Spirit) must come to recognize itself as the pure principle of Spirit's self-knowledge. Insofar as Idea's absolute circulation is not a ready-made circle, but a process, it involves a multiplicity of different stages: the logical or pure Idea, the Idea in its otherness or Idea as nature, the Idea that is for itself or Idea as Spirit. The task of philosophy is to present these stages in their systematic interconnection. The form of the system is not dictated by a merely external issue of order, but rather by an issue of content: if the Idea has to present itself as a totality without external presuppositions, i.e., as *absolute* Idea, then philosophy must bring to awareness the inner articulations of the Idea and, consequently, must comprehend itself as the culmination of the self-exposition of the Absolute Idea as Absolute Spirit. This development is, for Hegel, the true content of the Idea.

As we saw, the Idea embraces the aspect of self-finality found in Aristotle's concept of a perfect activity. At the same time, it entails aspects such as movement and a multiplicity of stages, which both pertain to what Aristotle called "imperfect activity" (*energeia atelēs*). This seemingly odd combination is only possible because Hegel elaborates a new concept of process, wherein these two elements are radically transformed.

As Ferrarin rightly notes, Hegel shows no sympathy for the Aristotelian theme of rest, understood both as the end of a movement and as a feature of the theoretical activity.[9] This lack of sympathy is motivated by Hegel's conception of the thinking's infinity: thinking is all-encompassing, it is active everywhere and at any time, so that the dualities between consciousness and unconsciousness, between an eternity out of time and an eternity in time, do not hold for thinking. By virtue of "negativity"—a rich term, meant to join Hegel's reappraisal of Spinoza's consideration of finitude with the transformation of Aristotle's *energeia* into the restless movement of the Concept—thinking establishes the subversion of the scholastic motto *operari sequitur esse* (the act of doing follows the act of being) into *esse sequitur operari*. In addition, as a consequence of Hegel's understanding of philosophy as thinking's self-acknowledgment in concrete reality, the Aristotelian idea of the theoretical sciences is undermined. This is because the ontological independence of the subject matter (i.e., any realm of being whatsoever) from the activity of investigation (i.e., theory) turns out to be an assumption that may hold, at best, only for a finite mode of cognition.

We saw that for Aristotle the criterion for determining a perfect and an imperfect activity is respectively the internality or externality of the end with respect to its process. Even this assumption is reversed by Hegel's deep revision of the reflective categories of internal and external, a revision that is motivated by his understanding of thinking as a double process of *Entäusserung* (exteriorization) and *Erinnerung* (interiorization), a process that must not be confused with the alienation of a simple, preexisting unit.[10] I will spell out two implications of this revision.

First, the internality of the end with respect to the activity does not mean that activity stays within the individual agent, i.e., within a substance underlying the movement. On the contrary, for Hegel the action is perfect insofar as it exteriorizes the agent's will. Further, the individual agent is not a self-enclosed substance, but the moment of singularization of the concrete universal, namely, the will as the rational causality of the Concept. The real difference between internal and external ends belongs to the stage of finite spirit, which is marked by the gap between form and content of the will. By contrast, the infinite Spirit—which is not affected by the presupposition of its contents—only acknowledges the modal difference between interiorization and exteriorization of the Absolute Idea.

Second, the movement of the Idea is the transition from potency to act only in the sense of the process of actualizing the logical element, which is always somehow active, in the real element, which experiences an ongoing alternation of passivity (split between a product and its process) and activity in the proper sense (a growing transparency between a movement and its result). The referred transition is not the realization of an empty possibility by means of the action of some kind of extramundane intelligence, but the scientific development from the abstract to the concrete meaning of logicalness. The three final syllogisms of the system are meant to show that this

development is not to be understood as a linear track, constrained by the didactic order of the *Encyclopedia* (first syllogism), nor just as a temporal process of learning on the part of subjective knowing (second syllogism).[11] The true presentation of the process is the third syllogism, which understands thinking or *logos* as the self-awareness of Absolute Spirit through the stages of the Absolute Idea described by the previous syllogisms: the objective system of reason, which seems to unfold independent of the activity of any subjective thinking, and the subjective system, which admits the standpoint of human subjectivity, reflectively striving for liberation from the immediacy of the given in order to discover its own infinity.[12]

### *3.2 Dissolution or Reconstruction?*

The foregoing sketch of Hegel's idea of objective thinking should explain why the Aristotelian background cannot hold anymore. First, by assuming the priority of what is thought (i.e., being) over thinking, Aristotle ends up neglecting the transformative character of theory. Second, by assuming the distinction between perfect and imperfect activities, he cannot conceive of theory and praxis as inner moments of thinking's interiorization and exteriorization. In the light of the dissolution of Aristotle's criterion, we must therefore ask ourselves what is left of his tripartite division between theory, praxis, and making.

According to Riedel, the tripartition in question disappears. This occurs for two reasons. First, action and production are both sides of the ontological process of the self-exteriorization of Spirit.[13] Second, theory comes to draws its sense not from an original relation to something irreducible to human being, but from the way human being relates to itself as Spirit—i.e., as a process of making explicit its own inner logicality.[14] Riedel discusses both historical and theoretical grounds for the dismantling of Aristotle's classification. On historical grounds, what is at play is the dissolution of the autonomy of practical philosophy from metaphysics, the Kantian formulation of the *Selbsttätigkeit* of reason, and Hegel's evaluation of the phenomenon of work, the relevance of which was being discovered through the rise of political economy. On theoretical grounds, the greatest subversion affects the concept of work, which is no longer considered from its result (the product) but rather from its origin (the maker), which, in transforming the given, also transforms itself.

Ferrarin endorses Riedel's analysis and points out that the dissolution of the independence of the cosmos from human thinking goes hand in hand with the replacement of a cosmological teleology with a conceptual, systematic teleology which "dictates the structure of the system and orders sciences, laws, and natural regions to show in them the progression of the Idea" and to account for "the emergence of spirit (human subjectivity) that unifies and mediates all aspects of reality".[15]

Riedel and Ferrarin seem to agree in concluding that the dissolution of the Aristotelian criterion necessarily results in the dissolution of any construal

of theory and praxis as autonomous, since their distinction necessarily depends on such a criterion. They are right in emphasizing the dissolution of the Aristotelian criterion, but we shouldn't draw the conclusion that theory and praxis are simply sublated in "making." Just as making finds in Hegel a meaning that is quite distinct from any poietic activity, so theory and praxis must acquire a specific meaning within the new conception of objective thinking.

It is difficult to decide whether Hegel's criterion provides a dissolution *or* a reconstruction because Hegel's conception of thinking does not admit the unconditional validity of the principle of the excluded middle ("either-or"). This means that even the evident dissolution of the Aristotelian criterion is ruled by the criterion of *Aufhebung* (sublation), which determines not only the rhythm of logical progression, but also the confrontation of the system with figures in the history of philosophy. By virtue of the criterion of determinate negation, Hegel's understanding of theory and praxis is and must be, at one and the same time, a dissolution *and* a reconstruction of Aristotle's distinction. To be sure, we have no duty to endorse Hegel's self-understanding, but we must nevertheless take care to understand him on his own terms. In this regard, conceiving of the dissolution as a fusion or as a cancellation of any difference does not do full justice to the nuances of Hegel's system. On the contrary, if we understand the dissolution as a reconstruction, we leave ourselves open to the possibility that theory and praxis may be redefined within a different framework. In this way, we can also satisfy the demand for saving both the identity and difference between theory and praxis within the process of Idea's self-transformation.

### *3.3 How Does Hegel Rebuild the Meaning of Theory and Praxis?*

Essentially, "identity in difference" is another way of talking about process. This implies that the relation between theory and praxis does not derive from a mere taxonomic classification of ways of life, but arises instead from an immanent disjunction of thinking. As is shown by the Doctrine of the Concept in Hegel's Logic, disjunction is the particularization or internal differentiation of a universal. This means that theory and praxis do not stand in a hierarchical relation of succession, but rather in a relation of simultaneous disjunction and integration.

The moment of disjunction means that knowing (*Erkennen*) and willing (*Wollen*) are particular modes of their universal, which build the relation between concept and reality in opposite, complementary ways. It is important to stress that, in the *Science of Logic*, "The Idea of Knowing" (*Die Idee des Erkennens*) is the overarching title of the second chapter on the Idea. According to the systematic progression from the abstract to the concrete, the content of knowing and willing expands as we follow the path of their presentation. In the *Science of Logic* (especially in the Subjective Logic), they are studied abstractly or "in and for themselves" (i.e., without

the presuppositions of the finite spirit). In the Philosophy of Spirit, they are considered as global stances of Spirit's dissolution of the presupposition of externality between being and thought, givenness and activity.

The common reference to a genus suggests that the two modes of Idea's self-knowledge must display the moment of *integration*, whereby knowing and willing, theory and praxis, each contain the other as a moment in its own determination. Knowing entails willing, since the effort of attention and the interest in truth are necessary to transform sensations into representations and representations into thoughts. On the other hand, willing entails knowing, since no attempt to change the given according to a goal is possible without the capacity to envision such a goal and to evaluate whether our actions can affect reality.

I have said that the *Science of Logic* is still an abstract presentation of theory and praxis, since it disregards the opposition between nature and spirit. Abstractness does not mean indistinctness. Rather, it means that in the element of pure thinking, and precisely in the development of the logical Idea, knowing and willing must not be considered as the embodiment of two distinct attitudes of Spirit toward nature, but as two complementary moments of Idea's "impulse" (*Trieb*) to produce the unity of subjectivity and objectivity. Knowing is the process of superseding the one-sidedness of subjectivity, i.e., its mere self-certainty, through the appropriation of the objective world. Willing is the opposite process of superseding the one-sidedness of objectivity, i.e., its semblance of being a collection of contingent events devoid of subjectivity, by actualizing the practical activity of the Concept in the world.[16]

Both knowing and willing presuppose the separation of subjectivity and objectivity, and both simultaneously bridge this gap. The Logic teaches that this separation is not a given, a presupposition that the Idea possesses, but rather a "judgment" or an original division of the Idea, which gives to itself the presupposition of being a relation between subjective knowing and objective world. Ultimately, the possibility of knowing depends on the unity of the Idea, but this unity is not at all static: it is a process which has to account for the standpoint of finitude, i.e., for the existence of a stable difference between subjectivity and objectivity.

Additionally, the Logic shows that both theoretical activity (knowing in the finite sense) and practical activity (willing) are moments of Idea's drive for self-knowing (knowing in the infinite sense). Consequently, there is an asymmetry between knowing and willing which has two implications. First, willing presupposes the theoretical moment, because it is not possible to carry out a rational end in the world without recognizing that the world is rationally structured. Second, willing is subordinated to knowing because it is not the most perfect actualization of the Idea: its truth content consists in being a stage on the way to a kind of knowing that Hegel calls "science," and which supersedes the limits *both* of theory (in the narrow sense) and praxis.

Finally, the Logic displays a real unification of theoretical, practical and productive aspects when it is considered as "the final science (*die letzte*

*Wissenschaft*),"[17] namely, as Spirit's absolute self-knowing. The theoretical aspect amounts to the fact that Absolute Spirit, through science, is the process of knowing its own essence (i.e., the Absolute Idea) and giving the latter full play, "as it were merely looking upon its movement and development."[18] The practical aspect involves both the decision on the part of the individual subject to undertake the study of science and "the strenuous effort of holding off on one's own notions and particular opinions which are always trying to assert themselves."[19] The productive aspect is "thinking's free act of placing itself at that standpoint where it is for itself and thus *generates* and *provides its own object for itself*."[20] In other words, production is the self-movement of the content, namely, the spontaneity of thinking as such, and science is productive insofar as it brings this spontaneity to consciousness, articulating the indeterminate power of thinking into determinate thoughts.

Although it is impossible to understand what Hegel says about theory and praxis if we neglect the clue provided by the Logic, in no way am I suggesting that our consideration of theory and praxis is exhausted by the Logic. From a methodological point of view, terms such as "knowing," "willing," and "producing" are multivalent, not only because of the ambiguities of language (and Hegel's allegedly idiosyncratic use of it), but also due to the fact that Hegel's philosophy provides a vocabulary that is a sort of work in progress: a genetic definition of all of its terms, whereby each gains a more or less concrete meaning according to whether it occurs in the Logic or in the *Realphilosophie*. "Knowing" thus turns out to be multivalent, because it experiences a constant redoubling, not only within the Logic, where it can mean both the subjective or finite knowing and the developmental self-knowing of the Idea, but also within the philosophy of spirit in the *Encyclopedia*, where it is both the progressive liberation from the constraint of sensible givenness (Subjective Spirit) and the Absolute Idea that knows itself as Absolute Spirit.

Similarly, praxis or action is the actualization of willing, which is the purposive, self-initiating activity of the concept (subjectivity) in the objective world. In the Logic, purposive activity (*zweckmäßige Tätigkeit*) includes both an externally purposive activity, syllogistically reconstructed in the section on "Teleology," in addition to willing as the "Idea of the Good," which is the proper realm of "acting" (*Handeln*). What differentiates "work" (*Arbeit*) from action is neither the syllogistic form nor the necessity to deal with externality, but the content of the purpose and the form of the conclusion. In the case of work, the content is finite and indifferent. In the case of the action, however, the content is not indifferent, for it may be the realization of the good. At the same time, every accomplished work is a means for a variety of other goals—whereas the accomplished purpose of action has to break with the bad infinity of the means-end relation in order to have an objective or self-contained being.

What is prefigured in the Logic finds full actualization at different stages of the Philosophy of Spirit: first, in Subjective Spirit, which accounts for

the emergence of the singular human subjectivity out of nature; second, in Objective Spirit, which understands willing's objective being as the realization of free will in the intersubjective world of right (Spirit's second nature) and in history; third, in Absolute Spirit, which negates the contingent aspect of history, while retaining knowing and willing as atemporal moments of Spirit's reconciliation of its actual reality with its self-consciousness.

## 4. Conclusion

In closing, I will review some of the main points of my argument, and make a brief comment about a further difference between Aristotle and Hegel, concerning the purpose of philosophy.

I have claimed that Hegel's conception of thinking dissolves Aristotle's tripartite distinction of human activities, insofar as it dissolves all its main assumptions: the primacy of perfect activities over imperfect activities, of rest over motion, of nature over art, of what is thought over thinking, and, finally, the irreducible multiplicity of sciences defined according to the irreducible multiplicity of the realms of being. The core of this dissolution affects the concept of the human being, which ceases to be seen as a rational animal, whose *logos* achieves its excellence by honoring the self-sustained order of what is. For Hegel, human being is rather the spiritual embodiment of the all-pervasive Idea (or "reason"), which cannot be defined in advance either as finite or as infinite, since it is the very development from finitude to infinitude.

I have argued, further, that the distinction between theory, praxis, and making is not simply eliminated in Hegel. Rather, it is reformulated in a new systematic framework, absolute idealism, which establishes a simultaneous relation of disjunction and integration between acting and knowing, based on a new concept of "making" in terms of reason's spontaneity. For Hegel, acting, willing, and producing are not univocal terms because they gain different meanings according to the approach we take to the system. One approach is to start with the Logic by "abstracting" ourselves from experience; another is to come back to the Logic from Spirit's experience.

Hegel's subversion of Aristotle's *theōria* actually highlights a seeming point of proximity between the two thinkers: the self-purposive character of scientific thinking. For Aristotle, both ethical and theoretical lives are conducive to happiness, but the latter makes us happier than the former. To be sure, political life creates the conditions for the citizens of the *polis* to pursue happiness, but philosophy is superior to politics because it grants a greater happiness to those few who enjoy the conditions for choosing a way of life that prioritizes the *logos*, i.e., the essence that distinguishes human beings from any other living things.

For Hegel, happiness is not the first final cause of theory, since happiness is still a natural determination of spirit. Philosophy is not concerned with happiness, but rather with "satisfaction" (*Befriedigung*): a state in which

spirit is at peace with itself for having comprehended the contradictions of actual reality. Accordingly, the final cause of philosophy is the reconciliation of substance with subjectivity, i.e., of the reason that unconsciously *is* with the reason that *knows* of itself through the inner contradictions of its own development.[21]

## Notes

1 Paul Redding, "The Relation of Logic to Ontology in Hegel," in *Categories and Being: Essays on Metaphysics and Logic*, ed. L. Haaparanta and J. Koskinen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 145–166; 162.
2 S. Pihlström, ed. *The Continuum Companion to Pragmatism* (London: Continuum, 2011), 1–6.
3 The material of making does not depend on the human being in the sense that the maker is not the cause of its existence. However, the material depends on the technician in the sense that only his or her intelligence can choose the kind of matter that is meant to undergo the process of making. By contrast, in the purely natural processes the matter is given, in that it does not depend on a principle existing in a maker.
4 On the complex interdependence between theory and praxis in Aristotle, see: E. Berti, "Teoria e prassi da Aristotele a Marx e . . . ritorno," *Fenomenologia e società* 1 (1978): 277–289.
5 M. Riedel, *Zwischen Tradition und Revolution* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta Verlag, 1982), 11–40.
6 Alfredo Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 16–27; 96–101.
7 Berti observes that, in Aristotle's *corpus*, *poiein* has not only the technical meaning of "making" but also the general meaning of doing an activity. Accordingly, *poiein* or doing corresponds to the universal meaning of being as act and potency, a meaning that all the human activities (theory, action, and making) have in common. As such, "doing" is indefinable, and can only be illustrated by examples drawn from experience. See: Berti, "Teoria e prassi da Aristotele a Marx e . . . ritorno."
8 See G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (henceforth *Werke*), eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), Vol. 5 (*Wissenschaft der Logik* I), 43.
9 Ferrarin, 26.
10 For a commentary on what I take to be the basic features of Idea's self-externalization, see Federico Orsini, "On Hegel's Idea of a Logical Ontology," *Anais do IX Congresso internacional de Filosofia da UNICENTRO*, 2015: http://anais.unicentro.br/conifil/pdf/ixv9n1/72.pdf.
11 *Enz*. §§575–577.
12 About the immanent reading of the three syllogisms of philosophy in the *Encyclopedia*, see: Theodore Geraets, "Les trois lectures philosophiques de *l'Enciclopédie* ou la realisation du concept de la philosophie chez Hegel", *Hegel-Studien* 10 (1975): 231–254.
13 Riedel, *Zwischen Tradition und Revolution*, 29–31.
14 M. Riedel, *Theorie und Praxis im Denken Hegels* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1965), 140.
15 Ferrarin, 93.
16 For a remarkable commentary on the "Idea of Cognition" (*Idee des Erkennens*) in the *Science of Logic*, see: K. Düsing, *Das Problem der Subjektivität in Hegels Logik*. *Hegel-Studien*, Beiheft 15 (1984): 288–304.

17 Hegel, *Werke* 6: 495.
18 *Enz*. §238 A.
19 *Enz*. §238 A.
20 *Enz*. §17, p. 45.
21 *Enz*. §6.

# 12 Ethical Life, Politics, and the Actualization of Freedom

## Hegel and Aristotle's *Politics*

*Angelica Nuzzo*

### 1. Introduction

Hegel's debt to Aristotle in the Philosophy of Spirit goes back to his early Jena years and remains an enduring presence in his mature system. Hegel's acquaintance with Aristotle's texts and his re-visitation, repeated translation, and adaptation of crucial Aristotelian passages[1] have been a topic of interpretation throughout the history of Hegel scholarship. In this regard, we meet an unusual consensus among interpreters as they converge on at least two points. On the one hand, there is little controversy surrounding the fact that in the Jena years Aristotle's ethical and political thought plays a fundamental role in shaping distinctive Hegelian ideas such as the concept of "ethical totality" (*sittliche Totalität*) expressed by the *Volk* (into which the Greek *polis* is now translated), the notion that the political community has "the good and right"[2] as its end, and the idea that the *polis-Volk* is prior to the individual.[3] These concepts are central to Hegel's practical philosophy from the 1802 *System der Sittlichkeit* and the *Naturrechtsaufsatz* up to the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*. It is also significant and unique to Hegel, in contrast to his contemporaries, that he pitches these Aristotelian-informed views against modern and contemporary natural right positions and individualistic contractarianism. At the same time, he underlines the fundamental historicity of Aristotle's concepts whereby any pledge to return to or even merely idealize the model of Greek ethical life is condemned to irrelevance and anachronism.

On the other hand, interpreters also agree on the fact that in the *Philosophy of Right* and *Encyclopedia*, as Hegel arrives at his definitive conception of the political state—framed, this time, by a new notion of Ethical Life (*Sittlichkeit*)—the close analogy with and connection to Aristotle's political and ethical views must be abandoned and the fundamental distance (historical as well as conceptual) that separates the Greek *polis* from the modern post-revolutionary state must be brought to the fore. The ideas of self-consciousness and subjectivity are among the decisive elements that seem to render Hegel's Objective Spirit simply incomparable with Aristotle's *polis* and *politeia*. These ideas imply the notion of a right of interiority, of the fundamental split and conflict within the ethical whole proper to modernity, the rise of

the distinctive economic sphere of civil society, the value of work and labor as the first stage in the actualization of freedom (and not as mere activities pertaining to slaves), and a different conception of political sovereignty.

My aim is to challenge this latter point of consensus, and without denying the obvious distance between Hegel and Aristotle, to show that in Hegel's later philosophy the relationship to Aristotle is far more complex than is assumed. I will begin by sketching the context in which Hegel's reading of Aristotle's *Politics* should be placed. My main goal, however, is to show that while historical and conceptual differences separate Aristotle's *polis* from Hegel's Ethical Life, Aristotle's *Politics* is indispensable for the systematic articulation of the succession "Abstract Right–Morality–Ethical Life" (*abstraktes Recht–Moralität–Sittlichkeit*) that structures Hegel's 1821 work. I will argue for two claims. The first concerns the much-debated problem of the status of Hegel's Objective Spirit with regard to the division of practical philosophy into a theory of morality or ethics and a political theory. My second claim connects Hegel's endorsement of Aristotle's thesis of the priority of the whole over the parts (or the *polis* over the individual) to the idea of freedom as (self-) actualization. I suggest that Hegel uses Aristotle's *Politics* Book One in order to pitch this idea against both modern theories of natural right, and against Kant's moral philosophy.

## 2. The Problem: Aristotle between Kant and Hegel

The most serious opposition to Hegel's practical philosophy comes from the Kantians, who contend that he has no proper moral/ethical theory at all, that "for Hegel moral philosophy is 'dissolved in sociology' or 'absorbed in political philosophy.' "[4] The subtitle of the *Philosophy of Right* which seems to equate it with "a doctrine of natural right (*Naturrecht*) or doctrine of the state in outline" gives a further sense of the difficulty the interpreter meets in positioning this work within the tradition. In fact, this is *not* a treatise on natural right but is rather the work that critically sanctions its end: dialectically, natural right is evoked in order to be sublated (*aufgehoben*) in a new "philosophy of right." Framing Hegel's position in historical perspective, we can hardly avoid the same set of objections. Despite his recognition of the modern principle of subjectivity, and despite his undeniable sensitivity to the needs of modern society and economic and political systems, in his moral philosophy proper Hegel does seem closer to the Greeks (specifically to Aristotle) than to his contemporaries (specifically to Kant). This proximity would indeed explain the objection concerning Hegel's alleged reduction of ethical theory to political philosophy, and would further justify the claim that a modern notion of morality is absent in his philosophy—the claim that Bernard Williams has formulated with regard to ancient ethics.[5] In short, is Hegel's theory of Objective Spirit really based on the assimilation of ethics to politics, a gesture carried out along Aristotelian lines yet transposed to the modern world? And are the Kantians right in their objection that Hegel

(like Aristotle, but without the justification of history) ultimately lacks a moral theory?

My claim is that Aristotle's idea of politics provides Hegel with a powerful argument against Kantian morality. More precisely, it provides him with the tool that, in the *Philosophy of Right*, articulates the systematic transition from Morality to Ethical Life, hence the sharp critique of Kant that this transition entails. Hegel reads Aristotle's *Politics* Book One in light of the contemporary debate on the structure of practical philosophy—and this, I suggest, is the perspective that makes Aristotle a figure of contemporary relevance for Hegel. Furthermore, the use of Aristotle as an anti-Kantian resource is the basis not only of Hegel's concept of the political state but also of a new, modern idea of morality. Hence, my conclusion: it is not true, as claimed Kantians, that Hegel lacks a modern concept of morality; his concept of morality is grounded in an idea of freedom that, on an Aristotelian basis, fundamentally differs from Kantian morality. Freedom, for Hegel as for Aristotle (but not for Kant), is the process of reason's and Spirit's actualization *outside* of pure morality: it is the actualization of the *entelecheia* and *telos* of the human being as political animal—the "nature" that is "actualized" in the world of historical praxis and of social and political institutions.[6]

## 3. The Historical Scene

In the German scholastic tradition, Aristotle is mediated through Leibniz and Wolff. Wolff's *Philosophia practica universalis* in its division of *Philosophia moralis* (1750), *Oeconomica* (1754), and *Philosophia civilis* (1756/59) dominates until Kant. Wolff's practical philosophy is rooted in a metaphysical notion of perfection viewed as the realization of man's entelechy. Since man's actions are directed to his perfection as actualization of his nature,[7] moral philosophy is grounded in metaphysics and ultimately disengaged both from actual human ends and from the social institutions in which these ends are realized. *Ius naturae* or natural right is part of the general theory of human action; it is not the topic of a special philosophy of right.[8] Accordingly, natural right "has its sufficient ground in the essence and nature of man," and consequently "can be deduced from the essence and nature of man."[9] Wolff's universal practical philosophy deduces from a presupposed idea of human nature the principles of natural right and contrasts them to positive and historical right. Politics or *Staatswissenschaft*, however, does not belong to the scope of universal practical philosophy. As Ritter has shown, Hegel is the first to reclaim politics for practical philosophy in a true Aristotelian fashion.[10]

In the debate surrounding Kant's philosophy, Garve emerges not only as an Aristotelian voice against Kant's anti-eudaimonism, but also as a prolific and influential translator of Aristotle's works. In 1798, Garve published the first volume of his translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, accompanying it with

a commentary on the first two books and with a long essay on the concept of *Sittlichkeit* spanning the period from Aristotle to the Scottish Enlightenment. This essay is important, among other things, for identifying the context of some crucial translation choices made by Hegel in his early years.[11] Garve's translation of Aristotle's *Politics* appeared in 1799. A year earlier, independently from Garve, Schlosser had published the first German translation of this work. Garve's Aristotelian eudaimonism combined with the influence of Cicero's Stoicism plays an important role in articulating Garve's disagreement with Kant in matters of moral and political philosophy—an ongoing disagreement that extends from the 1785 *Groundwork* to the 1793 *Theory and Practice* essay. In this debate, Aristotle's *Sittlichkeit* in its Garvean reinterpretation sets the counter-model to Kant's idea of a pure morality but has also the function of introducing the discussion on the relationship between morality and politics that is at the center of Kant's 1793 *Theory and Practice* essay. This discussion becomes relevant—albeit historically only indirectly—to Hegel's later articulation of the transition from Morality to Ethical Life in the *Philosophy of Right* (or, as I shall suggest, in the movement from Kantian morality to ethical life by means of Aristotle's politics).

## 4. Political Philosophy and the Question of Actuality: Hegel and Aristotle

Since Wolff's *Naturrecht* proceeds deductively from the assumption of a fixed metaphysical human nature to present the principles of natural right, these are viewed as unchanging, a-historical, and a priori principles separate from concrete human practices and institutions. Despite the connection with Aristotle's thesis that *ius* (right or justice) is natural,[12] the a priori character of Wolff's *ius naturae* sanctions its distance from Aristotle—a distance that is deeply rooted in Wolff's metaphysical assumption that possibility is prior to actuality. This is despite the fact that, in the introduction to the *Groundwork*, Kant criticizes Wolff's *Philosophia practica universalis* for the opposite reason, namely, for its lack of true a priority. Kant rejects the notion that the basic topic of practical philosophy is the will in its empty "universality," namely, "willing as such, together with all activities and conditions belonging to it in this general sense."[13] For, this starting point implies that practical philosophy cannot be a priori since it must include *all* the conditions of willing as such—hence all the empirical conditions developed in moral psychology and anthropology.

By contrast, for Kant the topic of pure practical philosophy is "a special kind of will," namely, "a will that is completely determined by a priori principles apart from any empirical motives." This is, famously, the "good will." Thereby Kant circumscribes against Wolff the sphere of his pure moral philosophy as the philosophy of a *particular* (in contrast to universal) type of willing, namely willing as it is determined exclusively by an a

priori principle. It is important for our present discussion that this is a philosophy that is *not* rooted in "human nature." On Kant's view, the moral law is in principle independent of human nature, of its empirical needs and metaphysical constitution.[14] This is also a practical philosophy that, against Aristotelian eudaimonism, conceives of the good not as the highest object of desire but as the absolute qualification of a particular type of willing. From such a conception of pure willing politics, economics, and right-justice are excluded. In this way, we have obtained some of the character of the idea of Morality that in the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel drives to its dialectical *Aufhebung* in the sphere of Ethical Life. In structuring this transition, Hegel reclaims Aristotle as an ally—the Aristotle from whom both Wolff and Kant distanced their practical philosophy either by grounding it in the potentiality of an unchanging human nature, or by restricting it to a priori principles of reason utterly independent of such nature.

But to see the deeper motivation of this connection I will turn to the general task that Hegel attributes to his *Philosophy of Right*. It is here that his closeness to Aristotle's *Politics* comes to light.

### *4.1 Hegel's Actuality and the "Philosophie des Rechts"*

The preface to the *Philosophy of Right* concludes with a remark on the function of philosophy in relation to actuality that addresses the type of problem with which the *Philosophy of Right* should concern itself under the historical conditions of the present age. Hegel maintains that as "thought of the world" philosophy is necessarily bound to its historical actuality. This is even more true for a reflection on a world that is the product of Spirit's activity and owes its actuality to the activity that has produced it. It is also true, however, that in relation to this reality its conceptual comprehension emerges always "too late." The *philosophical* comprehension of Spirit's world consists precisely in this delay—in contrast to political activity, for instance. Hegel famously insists that philosophy "appears in time only *after* actuality has completed its process of formation."[15] This explains why, with regard to actuality and its conflicts, philosophy comes always "too late"—too late to give instructions on how the world "ought to be," too late to solve its contradictions, prescribe norms, and change the course of history. This, however, is neither its function nor its aim. Unlike Plato, Hegel does not believe that the philosopher ought to be king.[16] But if the normativity of philosophical concepts in the practical realm is not the immediate grip on reality proper to political action, it is also not the lofty ideality of Platonic or Kantian moral ideas detached from reality and untouched by its impurity.

The defining function of Hegel's practical philosophy is the function of raising the relevant questions under specific historical conditions, and of asking them in a theoretically relevant and practically engaged way. In this, I submit, Hegel's practical philosophy is close to the function that Aristotle assigns to his *Politics*. Practical concepts have a grip on reality, i.e., they

are normative for subjects acting in the world. This is neither because the philosopher has the power to give instructions on how the world ought to be, nor because philosophy can or should aspire to be politics. Rather, it is because philosophical concepts are theoretically, practically, and historically "relevant," that is, they are immanently connected to the process of freedom's actualization.[17] Both for Aristotle and for Hegel, philosophical concepts are connected to actuality in virtue of the philosophical "method" from which practical concepts obtain.

A moral and political theory aiming at ideal purity and ahistorical universality—whether Platonic, Kantian, or even Rawlsian—is either outright irrelevant to contemporary actuality, or relevant only contingently. The idealized world of the "good will," just as the world of the "original position," is as irrelevant to the world of human praxis as the perennially flawed world of fact is irrelevant to the abstract validity of the moral and political ideal. While Plato and Kant stress the latter (no moral idea can be rendered invalid by facts), Aristotle and Hegel are interested in the former (no valid moral idea can lack practical and political relevance). In fact, deprived of relevance, ideal norms are not *real* norms, i.e., they have no normativity and no grip on the will of actual agents; they are reduced to what the young Hegel calls the indifferent "dead positive." Ultimately, both for Aristotle and Hegel, political philosophy is concerned with "real" politics, not with ideal norms.

Now, I read Hegel's critique of Kant's morality in the *Philosophy of Right* as a critique of the *missing relevance*—hence of the *failed normativity*—of Kant's formal theory to the question that a "philosophy of right" is charged with raising. On this view, relevance and the attention to historical concreteness should be addressed in the *foundation* of the theory, because relevance is the necessary condition of *normativity*—in the moral as well as in the political realm.[18] Indeed, for Hegel, *Sittlichkeit* as foundation of *Moralität* is also "the truth of the concept of freedom."[19] As freedom is no longer ideal causality placed outside of the spatial-temporal nexus of appearances but is instead historical self-actualization within that nexus, it is also no longer identical with strictly moral action. This explains Hegel's strong claim against Kant: to assume *Moralität* as the *foundation* of practical philosophy, as Kant does, means "to make the standpoint of *Sittlichkeit* utterly impossible, even to explicitly destroy and spurn it."[20] If morality is made into the foundation, then no "transition" to ethical life is possible: freedom and moral action become identical so that the development of freedom in social and political institutions is rendered invalid from the start. Freedom cannot be meaningfully realized *outside* of morality: confined to the a priori conditions of pure willing, freedom remains an unactualized possibility. Now, it is in the transition from the *Moralität* of Kant's "good will" to *Sittlichkeit* as "the living good" whose actuality is embodied in the conviction and action of free self-consciousness that I place Hegel's appeal to Aristotle's *Politics*.[21]

### *4.2 Aristotle's Actuality: Nature and Politics*

Book One of Aristotle's *Politics* opens with the invitation to verify by direct acquaintance the claim that "every *polis* is a sort of partnership"—a *koinonia*. For, Aristotle maintains, "we see" (*horomen*) that this is how things are.[22] Proceeding in the same methodological way, turning to the issue of the constitution, Book Two looks at the constitutions "actually employed by certain of the states said to be well governed." Aristotle's methodological concern is relevant here. The starting point is from an actuality that is presupposed as being fundamentally intelligible, although not necessarily well-ordered. This starting point is necessary both pragmatically, in order to capitalize on what "is right and expedient" and proved by practice in existing constitutions, and in order to avoid the objection that proposing something utterly new and different from actual practices means to flee reality for a naïve idealism. Accordingly, Aristotle starts by examining what is actually employed and practiced so "that we may be thought to endorse this *methodon* because the forms of constitution that already exist are not satisfactory."[23] On Aristotle's view, the standpoint of actuality determines the *critical* stance of the philosophical inquiry (against the idealism of a priori norms that simply dismiss what seems to empirically contradict them). In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle famously takes this same position by claiming that practical philosophy must start from commonly held opinions and given practices, and move on to "save the appearances" (*sozein ta phainomena*).[24] On this basis, from the recognition of the same methodological strategy Raymond Geuss draws a political implication different from my own position, labeling Aristotle a "bourgeois" philosopher, thus bringing him close to Hegel's position *vis-à-vis* political actuality. In both cases, the philosopher considers philosophy's task to offer a conceptualization of the actual. He turns to the actual world as his starting point, and assumes that this world, despite its apparent unreasonableness and contradictory semblance can, in fact, be brought to an intelligible order (with Hegel: it can be "apprehended in thought"; with Aristotle: it can be rationally "saved").[25]

*Politics* Book One opens with Aristotle's famous claim regarding the "natural" character of the *polis*. Here a *caveat* is in order. In addressing the issue of the natural character of the *polis*, I will not dwell on what the literature usually takes to be the main difference between Hegel and Aristotle—namely, Hegel's holding fast to the separation between nature and spirit, hence the claim that ethics, politics, and freedom are sharply distinct from the natural realm.[26] I should add that I consider it problematic, even within Aristotle's text, to interpret the idea of the naturalness of the *polis* as its belonging to nature where nature is taken as the object of the *Physics*, as opposed to *nomos*, *technē* or, in a Hegelian sense, Spirit. That the *polis* is "natural" does not mean, for Aristotle, that it is a "natural object" or a "natural entity."[27] Aristotle's *polis*, just as Hegel's state, is the product of practical rationality. And yet the *polis* should still be considered "natural" in different senses.

Since the nineteenth century, commentators have taken the end-result of the argument of *Politics* Book One to be the claim that the community of the *polis*

is "natural" (or "from nature"). By contrast, I suggest that the natural character of the *polis* is the presupposition, not the aim of Aristotle's argument, a presupposition that implies, first and foremost, the methodological starting point of the political inquiry in the position of actuality. "We must first adopt as a starting point that which is the natural point of departure of this inquiry," maintains Aristotle.[28] The natural is herein the foundation—and the foundation cannot consist in an a priori essence or mere possibility severed from its actualized manifestation. Instead, it consists in the actualization of "nature" itself as *telos*. Such a foundation, however, necessarily leads the philosopher to thematize the process of actualization in its stages from simple and primitive forms to final and more complex manifestations—precisely because this foundation is in and from nature, and nature is no mere possibility but actual reality as *telos*. "Nature is end [*telos*]"—claims Aristotle with regard to the natural partnership that is the *polis*, itself the actualized *telos* (and the nature) of all other partnerships (the household, the family, the village).[29]

What we find here, more generally, is the central problem of the foundation of right and justice in actuality or the connection between right and actuality—between the human being and the *polis* that is the key issue later made central by the natural right tradition.[30] More specifically, and not surprisingly, what we find here is also the model for Hegel's argument against Kant's pure, un-actualized (and indeed un-actualizable) idea of morality. Such an idea cannot be the foundation. To take it as such is to render ultimately impossible (because un-actualizable) the *telos*, which is freedom as a process of actualization in the communal world of human practices and social and political institutions. The good, for Hegel as for Aristotle, is *das lebendige Gute* or the "good life" (*to eu zēn*) embodied in and enacted by the lives and practices of the citizens.[31] It is the actualized ethical common good, not the pure noumenal determination of the will preceding all phenomenal action and existing in abstraction from it. Thus, it is in a quite Aristotelian sense (not in the sense of modern natural right) that Hegel presents the task of his political philosophy as the task of conceiving "the absolute idea of ethical life" as "the absolute ethical nature [*sittliche Natur*]."[32]

Aristotle's inquiry starts from political actuality and then seeks its intelligible foundation. Such a foundation is "natural" in the additional sense of being *immanent* in the actual world, of being that *from which* the manifold empirical actuality issues. In this sense, Aristotle contends, "every *polis* exists by nature" and "man is by nature a political animal."[33] Human nature is not an a priori fixed potentiality; it is actualized in the substance of the *polis* and becomes real only in its praxis; while conversely the praxis of the *polis* is itself actualized human nature. This position is common to Aristotle and Hegel, and measures the distance that separates their political philosophy from the modern natural right theories. For Aristotle, natural right or right that is "from nature"[34] exists first in and with the *polis*, never before or outside of it. It is the universally valid principle that presides over the justice of the political order and over the action of its individual members. As such, it is universal and absolute but also, at the same time, historically and

empirically real; it is a right always realized across different political orders and immanent in them (because immanent in human nature). Laws and constitutions are not abstractions (alternatively derived from ideal norms or from a priori principles), for they must express the community that they order, and must change accordingly. They can neither exist nor be understandable in abstraction from such a community. Only on this condition are they relevant to, and normative for individual and collective practices. This relation is neither contingent nor a mere matter of successive "application" of an abstract principle to external circumstances. Rather, it represents the very nature of law and constitution as such. Right that is from nature is right always realized and actualized in the institutions of the *polis*. From this it follows that for Aristotle natural right (*to phusikon dikaios*) is not opposed to positive right (*to nomikon*) but is rather its very foundation.[35]

The Aristotelian idea that right is immanent in actuality is key to the systematic articulation of the structures of Hegel's Objective Spirit. Here the spheres of *abstraktes Recht* and *Moralität*—the institutions of property and contract, and purely moral decision and action—are ineffectual abstractions if taken outside of *Sittlichkeit*. And this is what they are in modern natural right doctrines and in Kant's moral philosophy. They acquire reality to the extent that their principles gain normativity by becoming the effectual practices of individuals living and acting within ethical institutions. Again, the good has reality only as the "living good" that is the actuality of *Sittlichkeit*; or as the "good living" (*to eu zēn*) that is the *polis* as realized *telos*. Considered *outside* of *Sittlichkeit*, right is the dead abstraction of modern natural right; morality is the ineffectual ideal of Kant's categorical imperative or of Plato's idea of the good, "unattainable by man" as Aristotle famously maintains.[36] Furthermore, while Hegel's systematic progression leads from *abstraktes Recht* to *Moralität*, on to *Sittlichkeit*, it is the latter which is the true ground and the immanent foundation of the former spheres, as the former exist and have actuality only within Ethical Life. In this way, Aristotle lends force to Hegel's critical argument against both modern natural right and Kantian morality, i.e., to the need for both abstract right and morality to be conceived as overcome in the actuality of *Sittlichkeit* as their true ground or foundation. Clearly, at stake in Hegel's systematic articulation of *Sittlichkeit* is not an improbable return to the ancient *polis* but the gesture whereby the methodological key conception of Aristotle's *Politics* is brought to bear on the crucial modern problem of the relation between right, morality, and politics.

Another methodological principle of Aristotle's political thought connected to the idea of the priority of what is by and from nature, gains from early on great relevance for Hegel. In the *Naturrechtsaufsatz* Hegel writes, quoting *Politics* Book One:

> Ethical life cannot express itself in the individual if it is not the soul of the individual. And ethical life is the soul only to the extent that it is a universal, and is the pure spirit of a people. The positive is prior

> to the negative according to nature; or, as Aristotle says: "The people [*Volk*] is prior to the individual according to nature. For, since the individual as particularized has no independence, it must be in its unity with the whole, just as all the parts are. But whoever cannot be in community . . . is not a part of the people and is, accordingly, either a brute animal or a god."[37]

As the "soul" is immanent in the body and instantiates its living, animating principle, the soul also expresses the modality whereby the ethical whole is present in and is enacted by the individual, who lives and acts in it as a constitutive member.[38] In the perspective of modern subjectivity, insofar as ethical life is embodied or directly "expressed" in individuals, it is the "negative," because of the conflict into which individuals enter once their lives and actions are connected to the whole (in the whole individuals perceives their limits as individuals). But the negative, in Hegel's rendering of Aristotle's principle, presupposes the positive, which is prior to it according to nature. The positive is the *organische Sittlichkeit* as the totality of the whole that precedes individuals and makes them possible as acting ethical individuals.[39] The peculiar logic that regulates the relation between the whole and its parts is now relevant, both for Hegel's conception of the state and for Aristotle's conception of the *polis*. Herein hinges, once again, Hegel's critical argument against natural right.

Hegel consistently uses Aristotle's idea of the priority of the whole over the parts—i.e., ultimately, the claim that the *polis*-whole is "natural" (both in the sense of being the foundation and actualized *telos*, and in the sense of being immanent)—as an argument against natural right, which endorses, by contrast, the opposite logic. In this tradition, significantly, the political unity is an artificial, not a natural totality; it is a *posterius* not a *prius*; the result not the foundation. And it is, in addition, the totality of a mechanical aggregate, not that of an organic whole. In the aggregate, the totality results from the sum of already independent and self-sufficient parts or atomistic individuals. The whole is explained analytically by explaining the nature of its individual parts, and is nothing over and above its parts. The individual is self-sufficient; the whole is dependent. The whole is not the "soul" of the individual as the individual does not owe its life and activity to the whole—the reverse is rather the case: the self-sufficient individuals are the "natural" basis from which first the *populus*, and then the *civitas* obtain.

Hegel's choice of translation in the quoted passage, whereby the natural *koinonia* of Aristotle's *polis* is rendered with *Volk* has a clear polemical intent against the natural right tradition. The unity of the *Volk* precedes by nature the individuals, thereby negating their original self-sufficiency—just as for Aristotle the human being is neither beast nor god because of his lack of self-sufficiency. In fact, famously, "man is by nature a political animal,"[40] which means that the actual nature (or *telos*) of man is not to be an isolated, atomistic individual but to be part of the political whole since it is only

in the *polis* that individuals can perform their properly human function.[41] Only the composite, organic unity of the *polis* "has attained the limit of virtually complete self-sufficiency."[42] For Hegel, Aristotle's *polis* is not the *civitas* into which natural right theories unify scattered individuals (or the *multitudo*) by means of an artificial contract. In Hegel's earlier viewpoint, Aristotle's *polis* is *Volk*, while later, in the *Philosophy of Right*, it is *Staat*; it is the organic totality that precedes the individuals and first transforms them into citizens. As Norberto Bobbio has noticed, both for Hegel and for Aristotle the logical progression is the opposite of that of Hobbes.[43]

At the beginning of *Politics* Book One, Aristotle presents the central claim of this book, namely, that "the statesman, the royal ruler, the head of an estate, and the master of the family" are not the same type of ruler differing only with regard to the size of the community over which they preside, but are instead different essentially and "by nature."[44] Aristotle claims that there are different types of political community (and correspondingly different types of rulers possessing different practical virtues)[45] because there are different types of people—and this difference is one given "by nature." Aristotle contends that the refutation of the prevalent view (i.e., that those forms of rule are in principle the same) hinges on the methodological principle that the synthetic whole (*to syntheton*) "must be analyzed [*diairein*] down to its uncompounded parts."[46] In the case of the *polis*, this principle suggests that by proceeding from the whole to its parts we shall discern, "in relation to these different kinds of rulers, what is the difference between them."[47] In other words, by analyzing the whole of the *polis* to its constituents it will become apparent that the rule of the family and that of the village differ *in type* from the political rule.

I suggest that in structuring the *Philosophy of Right* in the spheres of *abstraktes Recht-Moralität-Sittlichkeit*, and in analyzing Ethical Life in the relations of family, civil society, and the state, Hegel proceeds according to the same methodological principle as Aristotle. The crucial point, however, and the only one I want to make presently, is that this way of inquiry does indeed "prove" Aristotle's claim regarding the essential difference between the types of rulers only because the *polis*-whole that is analyzed is an organic, synthetic whole and not a mechanical aggregate—because, in other words, "the *polis* is prior in nature to the household and to each of us individually."[48] In an aggregate, the analysis of the whole yields information on the component parts, not on the whole itself, or yields information on the different types of people, not on the type of community that they respectively form. In the case of the *polis*, by contrast, the parts into which the organic whole is analyzed are informative on the nature of the whole because they are themselves *determined* to be what they are by the whole, and are homogeneous to the whole (namely, they are of the same nature as the whole). Hence Aristotle's claim is not that the *polis* is natural because family and household relations are natural—for the causal relation is rather the opposite. And this is the case precisely because the whole is first by nature and is the *telos* for the sake of which the parts are actualized.

Since the household is for the sake of the *polis*, the *polis* determines what the household is like, not the other way around. Hence, in studying the parts we get a new insight into the nature of the whole, whose actuality is the actuality of the parts. The *polis* is not modeled on the household; yet, by examining the household, we gain insight into the nature of the *polis* that is the household's *telos*. In breaking the *polis* down into its constitutive parts, we gain an insight into the different forms and relationships of rule that constitute the political society. Aristotle sums up his analysis at the end of *Politics* Book One, thereby building the transition to Book Two:

> since every household is part of a *polis*, and these relationships, i.e., the master-slave, the paternal, etc. the conjugal relation are part of the household, and the excellence of the part must have regard to the excellence of the whole, it is necessary that the education of both the children and the women should be carried out with regard to the form of the constitution.[49]

## 5. Conclusion

I have argued that Hegel's appeal in the *Philosophy of Right* to Aristotle's *Politics* Book One is a crucial tool used to build the systematic structure of the work's successive spheres—*abstraktes Recht-Moralität-Sittlichkeit*. The critical force of this systematic structure can be appreciated if we acknowledge that the reference to Aristotle allows Hegel to counter both the idea of abstract morality proposed by Kant and the conception of the state proper to the natural right tradition. In particular, Hegel capitalizes on Aristotle's notion that the *polis*-state is prior by nature to the individual and entails its immanent *telos*; that the ethical whole is the organic unity and the "soul" immanent in the parts in such a way as to constitute their actualization. Ultimately, Hegel's reference to Aristotle's *Politics* is rooted in a deeper affinity between their views on the role of politics and ethics within practical philosophy. Both uphold a realist conception of politics that assumes the standpoint of actuality as methodological starting point, and that refuses to refer the normativity of practical concepts to an ideal, transcendent dimension separate from human social and political practices and institutions.

## Notes

1 Such as *De Anima* Book Three, 4–5; see Walther Kern, "Eine Übersetzung Hegels zu De anima III 4–5, mitgeteilt und erläutert," *Hegel Studien*, 1 (1961): 49–88. See *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* §378 where Hegel refers to *De Anima* as "the only work of speculative interest" on the topic—and the topic is not the "soul" strictly speaking but, more broadly, the concept of Spirit.
2 G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (henceforth *Werke*), eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), Vols. 18–20, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 19: 225.
3 *Politics* 1253a 20. See the discussion that follows.
4 See Allen Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 8ff, and the discussion of the relative literature; Ernst Tugendhat,

*Selbstbewusstsein und Selbstbestimmung* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1979), 349; see the response to Tugendhat in Ludwig Siep, "Was heisst: 'Aufhebung der Moralität in Sittlichkeit' in Hegels Rechtsphilosophie," in Siep, *Praktische Philosophie im deutschen Idealismus* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1982), 216–239; for a recent appraisal of the relevance of Hegel's theory see Siep, "The Contemporary Relevance of Hegel's Practical Philosophy," in *Hegel: New Directions*, ed. Katherina Deligiorgi (London: Acumen, 2006), 143–158.

5 See Bernard Williams, "Philosophy," in *The Legacy of Greece,* ed. M. I. Finley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981). Annas has persuasively argued for the counter thesis: see Julia Annas, "Ancient Ethics and Modern Morality," in *Philosophical Perspectives* 6 (1992): 119 for the comment on Williams' claim.

6 See *Politics* 1252b 32–1252b 34.

7 See Christian Wolff, *Philosophia practica universalis, methodo scientifica pertractata* (Halle: Officina libraria Rengeriana, 1744), I, §103: "Actiones nostrae ad perfectionem nostram statuesque nostri per se tendunt."

8 Joachim Ritter, *Metaphysik und Politik. Studien zu Aristoteles und Hegel* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 1969), 134.

9 Ritter, *Metaphysik und Politik*, 133.

10 Ritter, *Metaphysik und Politik*, 107f.

11 For example, for the translation of Aristotle's *tymos* with *Tapferkeit* which replaces the more current *Mut* and *Gemüt*. See Lawrence Dickey, *Hegel: Religion, Economics, and the Politics of Spirit, 1770–1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 224ff.

12 See the crucial *Nicomachean Ethics* Book Five, 7, 1134b 20ff.

13 Kant, Immanuel, *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (henceforth AA) ed. Der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1910ff.), Vol. 4: 390.

14 Kant, AA 4: 389. See for the broader discussion Manfred Riedel, *Between Tradition and Revolution: The Hegelian Transformation of Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 7ff.

15 Hegel, *Werke* 7 (*Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*): 28.

16 For Aristotle, see Christopher J. Rowe, "Aims and Methods in Aristotle's Politics," *Classical Quarterly*, 27 (1977): 159–172.

17 Notice that they are normative because they are relevant, i.e., they express the relevant question of the time; they are not relevant because they are normative.

18 Fichte's reformulation of Kant's categorical imperative in the *System der Sittenlehre* (1798) is close to Hegel's intention on this point.

19 Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* §141, Remark (*Werke* 7: 286f.).

20 Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* §33, Remark (*Werke* 7: 88.)

21 Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* §142 (*Werke* 7: 292.).

22 *Politics* 1251b 1.

23 *Politics* 1260b 29–1260b 36. The point is important in the discussion on Aristotle's idea of slavery as well, for it is debated whether Aristotle opposes "natural slavery" to the "actual slavery" encountered in many cities. For a sense of this discussion see Wayne H. Ambler, "Aristotle's Understanding of the Naturalness of the City," *The Review of Politics*, 47, 2 (1985): 163–185.

24 *Nicomachean Ethics* Book Seven, 1, 1145a 15–1145b 1–1145b 7.

25 Raymond Geuss, *Politics and the Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 177.

26 See, for example, Alfredo Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 358ff. But I follow here Riedel, *Between Tradition and Revolution*, 146. I have addressed the relation between nature and spirit already at the level of Hegel's "subjective spirit" (and the relation to Aristotle in this context) in "Anthropology, *Geist*, and Soul-Body Relation: The Systematic of Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit," in *Essays on Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, ed. David Stern (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012).

27 Thus, David Keyt's premise is simply wrong: see Keyt, "Three Fundamental Theorems in Aristotle's *Politics*," *Phronesis*, 32, 1 (1987): 54–79. See Ambler, "Aristotle's Understanding," 174 for the problems of interpreting the "natural" in terms of mere (physical) nature in connection to the issue of slavery, and Ambler ("Aristotle's Understanding," 176) with regard to the issue of natural vs. unnatural acquisition practices; for the connected problems arising from the interpretation of the citizen's relation to the *polis* in terms of the relations of the parts of a natural body see Robert Mayhew, "Part and Whole in Aristotle's Political Philosophy," *The Journal of Ethics*, 1, 4 (1997): 325–340.
28 *Politics* 1260b 36.
29 *Politics* 1252b 30–1252b 35.
30 See Karl Heinz Ilting, "Hegels Auseinandersetzung mit der aristotelischen Politik," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 71 (1963/64): 39f.
31 Respectively, *Philosophy of Right* §142 (*Werke* 7: 292), and *Politics* 1252b 30–1252b 35.
32 Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke. Jubiläumsausgabe*, ed. Hermann Glockner (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1927–1940), Vol. 1: 452; see Ilting, "Hegels Auseinandersetzung," 41.
33 *Politics* 1252a 30–1252b 5.
34 *Nicomachean Ethics* Book Five, 7, 1134b 19.
35 *Nicomachean Ethics* Book Five, 7, 1134b 19.
36 *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book One, 6, 1096b 13.
37 Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1: 510f. quoting *Politics* 1253a 25–1253a 30 "Die Sittlichkeit kann sich nicht im Einzenlnen ausdrücken, wenn sie nicht seine Seele ist; und sie ist nur, insofern sie ein Allgemeines und der reine Geist eines Volkes ist. Das Positive ist der Natur nach eher als das Negative; oder, wie Aristoteles es sagt 'Das Volk ist eher der Natur nach als der Einzelne; denn wenn der Einzelne abgesondert nichts Selbständiges ist, so muss er gleich allen Teilen in seiner Einheit mit dem Ganzen sein; wer aber nicht gemeinschaftlich sein kann, oder aus Selbständigkeit nichts bedarf, ist kein Teil des Volks, und darum entweder Tier oder Gott'."
38 It is important to emphasize that Hegel's reading of this passage does not imply the claim that the relation of the citizen-individual to the political whole is identical with the relation of the parts of a *natural* organism to the natural organism. This naturalistic rendering of Aristotle's part/whole argument is at the center of Keyt's interpretation in "Three Fundamental Theorems." Barnes, on the other hand, has used this same interpretation to argue for Aristotle's political "totalitarianism" (the same argument, on the same grounds, can often be found in Hegel's case as well)—see Jonathan Barnes, "Aristotle on Political Liberty," in *Aristoteles 'Politik'*, ed. Günther Patzig (Göttingen: Van den Hoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 263.
39 Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1: 452.
40 *Politics* 1252a 30–1252b 5.
41 See also *Politics* 1253a 19–1253a 29: man cannot perform its proper function when detached from the *polis* just as a hand cannot perform its function when detached from the organic body. In the separate existence, the function is reduced to mere potentiality (see Mayhew, "Part and Whole," 327f.).
42 *Politics* 1253b 29.
43 Norberto Bobbio, "Hegel und die Naturrechtslehre," in *Materialien zu Hegels Rechtsphilosophie*, ed. Manfred Riedel (Suhrkamp: Frankfurt a.M., 1975), Vol. 2: 86. For the translation problems offered by the term *polis*, see Ernest Barker, *The Politics of Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), xlvii ff.
44 *Politics* 1252a 6. For Aristotle's difference, on this point, from Xenophon and Plato, see Marguerite Deslauriers, "The Argument of Aristotle's *Politics* 1," *Phoenix*, 60, 1/2 (2006), 55–59.

45 The point is that to be ruler implies more than science; one is ruler not due to the science one possesses but due to the sort of person one is, i.e., as a result of the practical virtues one possesses.
46 *Politics* 1252a 19–1252a 20.
47 *Politics* 1252a 20–1252a 24; see 1260a 10ff.: "hence there are by nature various classes of rulers and ruled."
48 *Politics* 1253a 20. See for this point Deslauriers, "The Argument of Aristotle's *Politics* 1," 49f.
49 *Politics* 1260b 15–20.

# 13 Hegel's Critique of Stoicism

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## 1. Introduction

As Hegel once wrote, "the study of the history of philosophy is the study of philosophy itself."[1] Against the ordinary construal of philosophical history as the temporal succession of different doctrines or versions of truth, Hegel highlighted the implicit rationality of the very movement whereby philosophical doctrines emerge and replace one another. In his eyes, the fact that philosophy evolved in a certain manner is itself of great philosophical significance, and must be acknowledged and studied as such.

Hegel rejected the popular idea that the history of philosophy, like other fields of knowledge, is guided by a static or preformed notion of truth. If the historical task of philosophers consisted merely in correcting or completing earlier philosophical theses, the history of human thought would amount to nothing more than a series of educated opinions—some of them right, some of them wrong; some of them closer to the truth, others missing the mark completely. And since what is essential about opinions is whether they are true or false, the history of how they came to be adopted would amount to a secondary issue, possessing a merely contingent or anecdotal value.

Contrary to this view, Hegel holds that truth itself is a process, the immanent development of which he equates with the historical development of human reason. Philosophical doctrines are much more than mere opinions, he argues, because their emergence, endorsement, and eventual supersession are themselves an essential part of the dialectical process whereby truth *comes to be*. And although many doctrines contradict others, expressly refuting the theses they seek to establish, this contradiction does not exclude or eliminate any position. "Every philosophy has been and still is necessary. Therefore, none has disappeared; all are affirmatively preserved in Philosophy as moments of *one* whole."[2] Each new doctrine incorporates all the previous ones, raising truth to a new and seemingly final stage of development. However, once this new whole is unmasked as yet another step in the historical actualization of truth, a new and more comprehensive doctrine must come on the scene.

Reviving the classical notion of organism, Hegel compares the history of philosophy to a tree whose growth comprises a series of self-evolving stages:

its trunk is the negation of its seed, its flowers the negation of its leaves, and so forth. Each stage can only come about through the actual development and death of the previous ones.[3] Likewise, each philosophy reflects a particular stage in the intellectual development of humankind. Each is dependent on its philosophical demands and the resources available to fulfill them at that moment in history. They can neither anticipate an idea that it is not yet ready to emerge, nor can they ignore the latest philosophical conclusions and go back to a previous intellectual framework. Such an exercise would be "as silly as if the grown man would wish to spend energy in attaining the standpoint of the youth, or if the youth would want to be the boy or the child again—even though the man, the youth and the child are one and the same individual."[4]

In this essay, I will discuss Hegel's critique of Stoicism. Although the previous considerations are far too brief to serve as a comprehensive account of Hegel's methodological engagement with the history of philosophy, they can help anticipate what his interpretation of Stoicism might entail. In Hegelian terms, to ask what Stoicism means is not simply to ask what it stands for, or to go over its main theoretical principles, as though it were simply yet another philosophical opinion. Stoicism is a philosophical stage, and therefore a necessary element in the historical development of human reason. To understand Stoicism, one must first situate it within this global movement and determine whence it comes from and whither it leads.

## 2. The Context of Hegel's Critique

Despite Hegel's comprehensive analysis of the history of philosophy, the Stoics are not among his most cherished interlocutors. Unlike Skepticism, which Hegel revisits on several occasions, Stoicism is not the philosophical doctrine that most readily fits his dialectical scheme. In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, at the beginning of the chapter devoted to the Stoics, Hegel goes so far as to state that "the content of [their] philosophy has not much that is unique or productive."[5]

Given this discouraging evaluation, it might seem idle or even misleading to write specifically about Hegel's views on Stoicism. However, I will attempt to show that Stoicism is by no means a secondary stage in Hegel's global understanding of the history of philosophy, and that his views on the subject are far from irrelevant. His analysis has at least two undoubted merits: first, that of going beyond most conventional readings of Stoicism, by revealing its main philosophical propositions under a new, albeit controversial light; second, in so doing, that of further clarifying Hegel's own philosophical system and its main implications.

Stoicism is directly taken up in two parts of the Hegelian corpus: the section entitled "Freedom of Self-Consciousness" in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and the chapter dedicated to Stoicism in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*.[6] While both texts can be said to agree in their overall

depiction of Stoicism, there are some differences worth mentioning, especially in regard to their specific starting point.

First, a brief clarification concerning what Hegel means by "historical" is called for. The first half of the *Phenomenology*, in which natural consciousness rises to the standpoint of Spirit (*Geist*), consists of a series of self-evolving ontological models endorsed, tested and overcome by consciousness due to their internal contradictions. Yet even though some of these models are very similar to real philosophical doctrines, and can be traced back to specific authors and historical periods, Hegel's survey is not *historical*, in the conventional sense of the word, but rather *logical*, or *phenomenological*. To make a very long and controversial story short, this means that the succession of viewpoints endorsed by consciousness is irreducible to the actual history of human thought. They are the connecting stages of an immanent path of self-discovery re-enacted whenever consciousness ventures to find the truth about itself. [7]

In the *Lectures*, on the other hand, Hegel deals with the history of philosophy as it took place, openly referring to original sources and to the names and biographies of actual historical figures. Unlike the phenomenological progression, where some of the dialectical leaps seem anachronistic when confronted with their historical counterparts, in the *Lectures* the logical progression coincides with the historical one. The analysis is thus more detailed and much more comprehensive, spanning from the Presocratics all the way to Hegel's own philosophical standpoint. However, as we have seen, the ultimate meaning of this survey is not historical, in the conventional sense of the word. Hegel's aim is rather to deduce a philosophical or scientific pattern out of the contingent course of historical events.

Second, due in part to their different approaches to history, the *Phenomenology* and the *Lectures* ascribe different places to Stoicism within the evolution of human reason. In the *Phenomenology*, the Stoic consciousness is a variant of self-consciousness in general: i.e., the form of consciousness that recognizes itself as its own object. According to Hegel, human consciousness in its natural or immediate form tends to regard the objective world as intrinsically real—as something merely *in itself*, independent from the realm of subjectivity. Upon closer inspection, however, this assumption proves misguided and the logical exposition of its inconsistencies leads to the acknowledgment that objectivity is in fact "a moment of self-consciousness."[8]

This new standpoint amounts to a radical inversion of the previous one. Aware of its own sovereignty, consciousness now regards objectivity as a merely negative phenomenon, whose spurious autonomy must be negated and subsumed under the universal element of subjectivity. But since subjectivity is dialectically bound to the objectivity it seeks to negate, this subsumption cannot be achieved in any simple or immediate way. Hegel's dialectic of self-consciousness, with its intricate twists and turns, can thus be described as the thinking subject's attempt to break free from the contingent element of objectivity.[9]

Although I cannot go over the specific features of this transformation, I will mention its three main stages: first, self-consciousness starts by negating objectivity in general and restoring the Fichtean tautology I = I; second, this abstract negation turns into the concrete negation of the natural world and organic life; third, this negation is directed at another self-consciousness, and gives rise to a mortal struggle between two competing subjects. Ultimately, however, this struggle is unable to afford the independence craved by both contenders, since the death of either one of them leaves the other with nothing left to negate, and therefore with no means of asserting their independence. As a result of this contradiction, the struggle is transformed into a fight for submission, and culminates in the victory of a master over a slavish consciousness. Yet this new arrangement proves once again untenable: whereas the master amounts to a purely immediate form of self-consciousness, forever dependent on the slave's work, the slave is able to internalize his drive for self-sufficiency and attain a different, more radical kind of freedom. This new form of independence, no longer based on the simple negation of objectivity, is achieved when the slave learns to detach the freedom of his own thoughts from the bondage of his objective existence—in other words, when slavery gives rise to Stoicism.

In Hegel's phenomenological scheme, the novelty introduced by the Stoic consciousness is the ability to transform the contingency of the outer world into the content of a free and manipulable thought. In doing so, Hegel claims, consciousness is no longer bound by the power of circumstance. "Its principle is that consciousness is a thinking being, and that anything is really essential for it, or is true and good, only when consciousness relates to it as a thinking being."[10]

Nevertheless, by subordinating the realm of objectivity to the realm of thought, the Stoic does not attain true freedom. Only a mode of consciousness capable not only of negating the different contents that make up the objective world but also the very logic of their being known can secure the sovereignty of self-consciousness—and in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, that mode of consciousness is Skepticism. Hegel takes Stoicism to be an incipient version of Skepticism and sees the latter as the fulfillment of the former's liberating project. For the first time, the objective element to which the Stoics, with each new negation, were forced to go back is taken over by thought and nullified. For the skeptics, it is not only this or that content that lacks reality, but the notion of objectivity as such.

In broader terms, the phenomenological progression identifies Stoicism and Skepticism as the first conjoint elements of a wider triadic structure: the dialectical counterpoint to Skepticism and the primacy of subjectivity is the earthly objectivity of Judaism. Both dialectical poles will then interact and give birth to the standpoint of Christianity and to what Hegel dubs "the unhappy consciousness."

So much for the framework of the *Phenomenology*. In the *Lectures*, the historical context surrounding Stoicism is somewhat different. The Stoics

make their appearance at the beginning of the second great historical section, entitled *Dogmatismus und Skeptizismus*. The first section ended with the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, which Hegel commends as the first attempts at a truly scientific mode of philosophizing. Since it is not possible, at present, to go into this analysis, not even for a brief overview, I can only sum up its results. What emerges, in both cases, is the understanding of philosophy as the development of a self-determining universal "Idea." However, although Platonism recognizes the dialectical bond between this founding Idea and the determinateness of the objective world, it still favors the former over the latter, and subordinates the manifoldness of reality to the unity of an abstract philosophical principle. Aristotle, on the other hand, focuses on the objective world, and sets out to identify the rational (or ideal) foundation of each objective determination. His is therefore a descriptive philosophy, bent on cataloguing the various objective conformations assumed by the philosophical Idea in the domains of nature, logic, ethics, psychology, and politics.

For Hegel, however, Aristotle's focus on objectivity makes him lose sight of the unifying principle underlying the manifoldness of the objective world. Each different object, although bound to a universal rational principle, is part of an empirically deduced aggregate whose inner unity is not yet brought to light.[11] Because of this, Aristotle's philosophy prompted a historical reaction aimed at reaffirming subjectivity and re-establishing self-consciousness as the unifying source of objectivity. This reaction takes the form of a new dialectical triad, comprising the doctrines of Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Skepticism.

Hegel discusses the first two doctrines, Stoicism and Epicureanism, as structurally similar forms of dogmatism.[12] They are both born out of the demand for a universal principle, an absolute criterion on which to anchor the truth of particular contents. Their aim is to overcome contingency and to subordinate every single determination to the necessity of thought. But since Stoicism is nothing more than this one-sided demand, its efforts to subsume objective reality will prove unsuccessful. The universality of thought proclaimed by Stoicism is merely an abstract principle, forced upon objectivity and incapable of accommodating the richness of its content. It is not yet a *concrete* universality—a universality *in and for itself*, articulating both identity and difference, thought and being.

The same applies to Epicureanism, but the other way around. Instead of favoring thought over being, Epicurean philosophers proclaim the vanity of universal thought and turn their attention to the determinate as such, i.e., to feeling, sensuous perception and observation.[13] Yet in doing so, they once again entrench themselves in one pole of the relationship, losing sight of its concrete essence.[14]

Finally, Skepticism appears as the first real alternative to dogmatism. Like phenomenological skepticism, historical Skepticism amounts to a radicalization of the Stoic principle. While sharing the Stoic's disdain for

determinateness and the Epicurean's disdain for the universality of thought, the Skeptic is aware of the one-sidedness of both solutions. What they question is the very possibility of establishing a fixed standard, be it objective or subjective, for the assessment of what is true. In its full-fledged version, Skepticism is thus the negation of every criterion, whether based on thought or sensuous perception, and the ultimate acknowledgment that nothing whatsoever can be known.[15]

Throughout these historical reflections, Hegel highlights the decadent nature of Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Skepticism, in contrast to the fruitfulness of the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophical traditions. These new currents of thought, centered on the individual, are the philosophical echoes of a historical crisis, materialized both in the decay of the Greek State and in the ensuing abstractness of the Roman judicial world. Stoicism, in particular, is described as the withdrawal into the world of thought prompted by the progressive deterioration of the social, moral, and political structures that used to ensure the unity and coherence of the objective world. Although its origins are Greek, its essence was fully actualized in the Roman world, where the concrete communal ethics of Greek society were replaced by an atomic conception of human relations based on private property and individual right. Since the ethical bond underlying social and family relations was severed and transformed into the legal interaction of disconnected individuals, the Stoic was forced to recreate the lost harmony in the world of thought and to replace the social order with an ideal one.[16]

## 3. The Content of Hegel's Critique

Let us now look more closely at the Hegelian definition of Stoicism. In his overall analysis, Hegel insists on a central aspect of classical Stoicism, namely the voluntary dissociation between the allegedly self-evident nature of objective reality and consciousness's acknowledgment of it. By arguing that the truth of objective reality is not absolute but agreed upon voluntarily, Stoicism aims to reduce life's share of contingency and to limit its existential horizon to that which is really up to each human being, i.e., one's own thoughts.

To the Stoic thinker, reality is either good or bad, true or false, pleasant or painful—only as long as one *thinks* it to be so. Such attributes do not belong to reality in any substantial way. They are the reflection of the consciousness that thinks them. For an eloquent formulation of this principle, one needs only to recall Marcus Aurelius's famous aphorism, inspired by Democritus: "the universe is change [or indeterminateness] and life is opinion."[17] According to this new mode of subjectivity, "everything must be something thought, i.e., subjectively speaking, *my* thought."[18] In other words, the objective world no longer merely happens, but is rather *thought* to happen in such or such a way, and acquires its meaning only through thought. Therefore, self-consciousness does not need to adapt to the outer world in order to seek fulfillment or satisfaction. "Whether on the throne

or in fetters," the Stoic's aim is "to be free, and to preserve that lifelessness which continuously withdraws from the bustle of existence. . . *into the simple essence of thought*."[19]

The Stoic *apatheia* is the first of many weapons devised by consciousness to free itself from the contingency of the objective world. Yet according to Hegel, this strategy is not successful, nor is it able to nullify objectivity altogether. Moreover, it can be regarded as successful only by a consciousness incapable of grasping its own identity—a consciousness immersed in a historical-logical stage of development grounded in an incipient understanding of subjectivity. In order to fully understand Hegel's objections, it is helpful to follow, as he does, the tripartite structure traditionally associated with Stoic philosophy. Let us consider, then, one by one, Stoic physics, logic, and morals.

### *3.1 Physics*

The first case is the least interesting. Hegel sees Stoic physics mainly as a collage of Heraclitean and Aristotelian categories. Its most interesting point, albeit hardly original, is the general acknowledgment of a divine rational principle presiding over the natural world. The Stoics distinguish between an active principle and a passive principle: the world soul (*psuchē kosmou*) and matter (*hulē*). They describe the physical world as an eternal pantheistic process, whereby the divine principle turns the absolute indetermination of matter into form. Even though, as we shall see, this general conception is important in understanding Stoicism's subsequent claims, Hegel draws attention to its limited scope, arguing that every attempt to translate this principle into more direct terms has resulted in naïve forms of superstition.[20]

### *3.2 Logic*

Stoic logic, on the contrary, is far more interesting, as it focuses directly on what Hegel considers to be the main concern of Stoicism: the search for an absolute criterion of truth. For Hegel, as for the Stoics, only a true proposition can be called rational, and only a criterion capable of establishing its truth against all claims to the contrary can be hailed as the foundation of a truly scientific system of thought. As the Stoic account of human cognition goes, every thought is triggered by an impression (*tupōsis*) or an alteration (*heteroiosis*), spontaneously perceived. Out of this impression an equally spontaneous mental representation (*phantasia*) is born. However, it takes an act of comprehension (*katalēpsis*) for this mental image to become a "comprehended mental representation" (*phantasia katalēptike*), i.e., something I myself think and take to be true.[21]

This account, however, is still incomplete, for my thoughts are not necessarily true thoughts, but only thoughts that I claim to be true. There is yet no universal criterion to distinguish my version of the truth from the truth itself, and therefore no real ground for the development of science.

For Hegel, the Stoics have correctly realized that this impasse cannot be overcome by resorting to an objective standard of truth. Although according to the classical definition truth is indeed an *adaequatio rei et intellectus*, the difficulty lies in finding a criterion from which to assess such agreement. If a criterion is brought in from the outside to compare the object and its corresponding thought and see whether they match, it will only be comparing two different thoughts—the thought of the object and a second one, naïvely regarded as the object itself. And since this new agreement is itself only thought, a new criterion must be brought in, and so on *ad infinitum*.

The model of "truth by comparison," inasmuch as it is based on a presupposed pattern of reference, is condemned to circularity. Indeed, all it does is replace one version of truth for another version of truth, without proving the actual validity of any of them. And this is so because the object whose truthfulness it is supposed to assess is itself mediated by thought. As is well known, this conclusion is the starting point of Hegel's dialectical method. His philosophical "Idea" is also a criterion of truth, but a *dynamic* one, internal to the very relationship between consciousness and object. It is not a presupposition, but the necessary result of the mutual interaction of consciousness and the object.[22]

Perhaps better than anyone before them, the Stoics were also aware of the universal, all-encompassing powers of consciousness. They even went so far as to stress that that which seems more concretely and immediately true—i.e., sensuous perception—is also the reflection of a subjective ascription of meaning.[23] However, by opposing the sovereignty of consciousness to the emptiness of the object, or to its lack of substantiality, the Stoics lost sight of the dialectical nature of their relationship. Having realized that no objective principle can act as a reliable criterion of truth, they entrenched themselves in the subjective pole of the opposition and stopped short at the general claim that objective truth is a product of consciousness *and nothing more*. Their reasoning can be summarized in the following syllogism:

| | |
|---|---|
| Given that | A. There is no objective truth prior to thought; |
| and | B. Objective truth is that which exists prior to thought; |
| Therefore | C. There is no objective truth. |

For Hegel, Stoicism's main problem lies in the second of these premises. It is precisely because the object is conceived by the Stoics as something lying outside of thought, untouched by the powers of consciousness that their philosophy cannot move beyond an empty celebration of subjectivity. By subordinating the object to a mere reflection of thought, Stoicism overlooks the speculative element that was still vibrant in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, and then relapses into dogmatism.

For the Stoics, the fact that "something *is*, or has truth, is not due to its *being* so; . . . rather, [the fact] that it *is* has its force in the approbation of

consciousness [*Beifall des Bewußtseins*]."[24] This does not mean, however, that Stoicism amounts to a radical form of idealism. As we have seen, every thought is the reaction to an initial impression, without which no *phantasia* could ever come to be. And although that impression is claimed by consciousness as its own reflection, it still has to come about in order to be claimed as such. The point, however, is that such an impression is unknowable *in itself*—it is only this or that by being acknowledged as such.

Hegel takes issue with the one-sidedness of this account. By denying the substantiality of the outer world, the Stoic consciousness is left with no object other than itself. And its predicament is once again the general predicament of self-consciousness: since its own identity is nothing more than the suppression of objectivity, it is continuously led to revive the objective determinations it has already suppressed, in order to reaffirm their nothingness and re-establish its own sovereignty. Consequently, Stoicism leads to a sterile, self-annulling ontology: since its ideal is the self-identity of thought—a simple, abstract self-identity, in which no difference is allowed—the objects used up by consciousness are perfectly interchangeable. Their difference having been suppressed, there is no criterion left to favor one over the other. And herein lies the source of Stoicism's sterility. Although the Stoics may be lauded for having taken formal logic beyond Aristotle, Hegel argues that all their work was in a way simply the inner development of one founding tautology, namely thought's coincidence with itself.

### *3.3 Morals*

Finally, when it comes to practical philosophy, Stoicism's shortcomings are even more conspicuous. According to Hegel, a philosophical doctrine whose understanding of objectivity is reduced to an immediate suppression of objectivity cannot offer a compelling theory of human agency or human values. In order to take hold of the objective element and attain true independence, consciousness would have to absorb the very difference it aims to suppress. In Hegelian terms, the identity of self-consciousness would have to be conceived negatively, or dialectically, as the "identity of identity and non-identity"[25] or the "agreement with itself" "in what is other than itself."[26] Only thus would a free self-consciousness be able to forge a world for itself in which objectivity is no longer a mere other.

Therefore, Hegel argues that Stoic morals are merely a development of the same inconsistencies found in Stoic logic. To begin with, the Stoics have correctly recognized self-consciousness as the elementary driving force behind human actions and aspirations. While discussing the meaning of virtue, for instance, Chrysippus grounds the phenomenon of desire on a primary impulse of self-preservation, whereby every living being is continuously led to restore its original or native constitution.[27] This account comes very close to Hegel's own understanding of desire, inasmuch as both theories seek to show that the satisfaction of desire is not an end in itself, nor is it aimed

primarily at external objects. The desire of things is an indirect instance of the desire of consciousness for itself; i.e., an abstract or undeveloped form of self-consciousness.

Furthermore, human desire is different from that of other living creatures in that it is a *rational* desire. And since according to Stoic cosmology the natural world is itself the reflection of a rational principle (the *psuchē kosmou*), the true end of human desire is to live according to nature. In Diogenes's account, this happens "when all actions promote the harmony of the spirit [*daimon*] dwelling in the individual man with the will of him who orders the universe."[28] This principle, although edifying, is blatantly circular: on the one hand, virtue consists in living in conformity with nature; on the other hand, what is conformable to nature is virtue. Likewise, although thought must further determine what is in conformity with nature, the criterion for doing so is once again the use of reason.[29] Stoicism cannot escape this circularity because its ideal, whatever it is called, is only rationality as such, devoid of objective content.

> To the question of *what* is good and true, [Stoicism] gave once more for an answer the *contentless* thought itself: The true and the good are to consist in reasonableness. But this self-identity of thought is again only the pure form in which nothing gets determined. The general terms true and good, wisdom and virtue, with which Stoicism has to stop short, are thus in a general way undoubtedly uplifting, but since they cannot in fact lead to any expansion of the content, they soon become wearisome.[30]

The same critique extends to the relationship between virtue and happiness. Since nothing is good enough for thought but thought itself, no external object can ever become a true source of happiness. Such happiness would be contingent, and contingency is precisely what must be discarded. In like manner, no external aggression can ever be the source of true unhappiness, for its effects do not get at the core of the Stoic's identity. Even in the case of physical pain, what is felt is not unhappiness, in the Stoic sense of the word. And that is why the ancient Stoics proclaimed that pain is no evil, but a mere discomfort, incapable of breaking into the "inner citadel" of consciousness and endangering the unity of thought.

To the vanity of mundane happiness, the Stoic can only oppose what Hegel dubs "the ideal of the wise" (*das Ideal des Weisen*).[31] And because this ideal is just that—an ideal, an empty and untenable mode of intellectual beatitude—it lacks an active principle of self-determination from which objectivity and difference can develop. In other words, Stoicism is devoid of normative value—and therefore unable to bring about a real transformation of the surrounding world. Since the Stoic does not seek a real harmony between reason and existence, his teachings cannot translate into effective ethical mandates. For Hegel, a good example of this is the work of Marcus

Aurelius, an enlightened emperor whose *Meditations* were undoubtedly noble and inspiring, but whose philanthropy was short lived. After his death, the Roman world quickly regained its old habits. Given that Marcus Aurelius's philosophical project was essentially an individual project—or a universal project founded upon individual thought—his ideas died with him, and the fate of the world shifted according to the individual beliefs of his successor, the emperor Commodus, and his capricious personality.

Finally, the ethical impotence of Stoicism leads, in Hegel's eyes, to a dangerous corollary. Just as the Stoic wise man is immune to pleasure and pain, his conduct is ultimately impervious to human laws and customs. The only authority he answers to is the universal law of reason. But if there is no objective criterion to distinguish right from wrong, and if a criterion is nonetheless needed, Stoicism can also degenerate into a dangerous form of moral relativism. This potential arbitrariness lurks in the moral writings of authors like Seneca and even Marcus Aurelius. Although their teachings are generally conducive to moral dignity and political order, the standard against which their truth is measured coincides with the very will that deems them good and just. Rational behavior is advised because it is good, but the good is in turn nothing more than rational behavior. The same circularity emerges over and over again, incapable of reaching out to the objective world and taking hold of its content. Stoicism, inherently averse to concreteness and contingency, can offer no guidance in dealing with the real world.

Morally speaking, a philosophy thus conceived is naturally unable to secure the objective validity of its propositions. And, ultimately, it is just as capable of advocating this particular action or its exact opposite. The force of Hegel's argument lies in the realization that Stoicism's edifying righteousness is one small step away from a self-serving, Machiavellian philosophy. We, as readers, can believe Seneca's good intentions and assume he is indeed putting his particular interests aside and pursuing just and reasonable aims. But in doing so, we will be taking his word for it. The irony of the situation is that a less honest orator—one who would effectively pursue his own self-serving goals, with no real concern for reason or justice—would act in exactly the same way as Seneca does. He would conduct himself in much the same way as the madman whose madness consists in assuring his doctor he is not mad. Indeed, in the Stoic system, just as in any other self-based moral system, "it is *I* who bring forward these wise [and] good reasons. They are not the matter or the objective itself," but rather "the matter of my own arbitrary will, of my choice, a kerfuffle through which *I* ramblingly set up before me my noble mentality."[32]

## 4. Conclusions

Let us abandon Hegel's diagnosis and focus briefly on his prognosis. For Hegel, truth and reason cannot be assessed by a fixed criterion, whereby what is true and what is false could be neatly set apart. Instead, truth can

be measured only by a dynamic standard, an "Idea" able to embody the original and inexpungible relationship between thought and being. In light of this, it is not enough for truth to be thought of as such, since thought itself is originally bound by objectivity. Philosophy's role is not to subordinate reality to the abstract unity of thought, but to recognize the thinking consciousness itself as the concrete union of selfsameness and difference.

Both Hegel and the Stoics have insisted on the naïveté of belief in the immediate truth of the objective world. They have both argued, furthermore, that the so-called natural or objective consciousness is in fact a variation of self-consciousness. But whereas for the Stoics the alleged truth of the objective world can only be found in the world of thought, Hegel demands a higher form of synthesis, in which subjectivity and objectivity are recognized as complementary poles of the same dialectical movement. In Hegel's own terms, the Stoic's negation of objectivity is a *simple* or *immediate* negation, bent on dissolving the opposition by silencing one of its premises. What is needed, on the contrary, is the negation of this initial negation: the reintegration of the objective world within the world of thought.

In order for the freedom and the independence professed by Stoicism to be actualized, they must assume an objective form. But this return to objectivity is not a return to the naïve immediacy of sensuous perception. Rather, objectivity must be raised to a new rational standard. Likewise, the wisdom professed by Stoicism must cease to be a mere ideal. Only by moving beyond self-identity and accommodating difference can it give rise to a truly ethical standpoint. For Hegel, however, none of this is within the reach of Stoicism. Nor is it to come about through Skepticism, Stoicism's philosophical and historical offspring. In Hegel's grand scheme of philosophical history, the true depth of the Idea can be grasped only by more concrete forms of speculation, to be found in the higher stages of modern reason.

## Notes

1 See G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (henceforth *Werke*), eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), Vols. 18–20, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 20: 479. All German translations are mine.
2 Hegel, *Werke* 18: 56.
3 Hegel, *Werke* 3 (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*): 12, 19. *Werke* 18: 56; *Werke* 20: 477.
4 Hegel, *Werke* 18: 65. See also *Werke* 20: 510.
5 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 262.
6 Stoicism is also mentioned, in passing, in the last section of the *Phenomenology*'s Religion chapter, entitled *Die offenbare Religion* ("Revealed Religion"; cf. *Werke* 3: 547). This new dialectic amounts to a recapitulation, at a higher stage of development, of the second section of the Self-Consciousness chapter, entitled *Freiheit des Selbstbewußtseins* ("The Freedom of Self-Consciousness") which I am about to consider.
7 The debate concerning the role of history in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is indeed complex and highly nuanced. For further reading, see, for example, J. Heinrichs, *Die Logik der "Phänomenologie des Geistes,"* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1974);

Jean Hyppolite, *Génèse et Structure de la Phénoménologie de l"Esprit* (Paris: Aubier, 1964); Otto Pöggeler, *Hegels Idee einer Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Freiburg: Alber, 1993); Jon Stewart, *The Unity of Hegel's* Phenomenology of Spirit (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2000).

8 Hegel, *Werke* 3: 138.
9 See Hegel, *Werke* 3: 104–138.
10 Hegel, *Werke* 3: 157.
11 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 244, 247.
12 This designation is not original, and goes back to Stoicism itself. Sextus Empiricus, for example, divides philosophy into three main types—academic, skeptic, and dogmatic, the latter comprising Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics "and certain others. See Sextus Empiricus, *Works in Four Volumes* (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1967), 3. Sextus also explicitly names the Stoics, "those conceited braggarts," the chief opponents of Skepticism (see p. 39). In his historical survey, Hegel borrows many elements from Sextus's analysis.
13 See Hegel, *Werke* 19: 253f.
14 *Werke* Hegel, 19: 253f.
15 See Hegel, *Werke* 19: 254.
16 See Hegel, *Werke* 19: 252, 255. The opposition between the concreteness of Greek *Sittlichkeit* and the abstractness of Roman Law is also discussed in the *Phenomenology*—both implicitly, with regard to Stoicism, and explicitly, at the beginning of Spirit's historical evolution. See *Werke* 3: 157f., 355–359.
17 ὁ κόσμος ἀλλοίωσις, ὁ βίος ὑπόληψις. See Marcus Aurelius, *Works,* (London: Loeb Classical Library, 2003), 70. See also Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* II, 15; IV, 3; VI, 52; IX, 32; XII, 8, 22, 26. For the Stoics, human life is primarily based not on facts or events, but on sentiments (*hupolēpsis*), i.e., on the subjective ascriptions of meaning that render facts and events intelligible and meaningful.
18 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 251.
19 Hegel, *Werke* 3: 157.
20 See Hegel, *Werke* 19: 267f.
21 See Hegel, *Werke* 19: 268ff.
22 See, for example, Hegel, *Werke* 3: 28f., 76f.
23 Compare Sextus Empiricus, *Works*, 245 (a passage cited in *Werke* 19: 272); and compare Hegel's account of sense certainty at the beginning of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Werke* 3: 58–59.
24 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 271.
25 Hegel, *Werke* 2 (*Jenaer Schriften*): 96.
26 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 273.
27 See Hegel, *Werke* 19: 277.
28 Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1958), 196/197). Passage cited in Hegel, *Werke* 19: 279.
29 See Hegel, *Werke* 19: 278f.
30 Hegel, *Werke* 3: 158f.
31 See Hegel, *Werke* 19: 287–295.
32 Hegel, *Werke* 19: 292.

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# Index


Absolute, the 35, 50, 71, 84n33, 86, 96
Absolute Spirit 53n21, 62, 82, 86, 88, 124, 165, 167, 170, 171
Aetius 21n13
allegory of the cave 73, 76
analytic philosophy 67
Anaxagoras 3–4, 22n28, 25–38, 71, 79, 125, 126
Anaximander 26
Anaximenes 12, 22n29, 26
*Apology* 11
*archē* 10, 12, 13, 20n5, 22n28, 96, 122
Aristophanes 11
Aristotle 1, 2, 3, 4, 5–7, 9–10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 19, 20n2, 20n5, 20n10, 21n25, 22n28, 22n35, 25, 26, 28, 30, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37n1, 57, 62, 66, 68n3, 71, 76, 77, 79, 80, 82, 84n27, 85n45, 86–150, 151, 152, 155, 161–188, 193, 196, 197n12
atomism 27, 137
Aurelius, Marcus 194, 198–199

Barba-Kay, Antón 6
Bobbio, Norberto 184
Boyle, Matthew 133, 137
Brandom, Robert 84n22
Bruce-Robertson, Lawrence 4–5

Caird, Edward 85n35
Cassirer, Ernst 66
*Categories* 103, 108, 110
Christianity 32, 35, 36, 52n4, 192
Chrysippus 197
Cicero 177
*Clouds* 11
Commodus 199
Concept, the 6, 25, 29, 58–59, 60, 61, 64, 78, 82n32, 87, 89, 121, 126, 154, 156–158, 166, 168, 169
concrete universal, the 58–64, 79, 166
contradiction, principle of 147–160

Davis, Andrew 3
*De Anima* 2, 5, 6, 19n2, 101n75, 103, 112n5, 115–131, 133, 138–141, 185n1
*De Caelo* 23n39
de Laurentiis, Allegra 5–6
Democritus 26, 27, 125, 194
Derrida, Jacques 67
Descartes, René 34, 35, 64, 68n3, 72, 76, 77, 131, 132, 135, 140
dialectic (Hegelian) 2, 5, 63, 70, 75, 76, 82, 178, 189, 190, 191, 196, 200
*dianoia* 72
*Differenzschrift* 35, 62
Diogenes Laertius 14, 15, 16, 25, 198
divided line 5, 70, 72, 74, 76, 78, 80, 82
Doull, James 83n9, 84n26
*dunamis* 124, 162

Eleatics 3, 9, 10, 15–19, 26, 30
Empedocles 13, 20n2, 21n25, 22n28, 26, 27, 36, 125
empiricism 59, 134
*Encyclopedia Logic*, *The* 80, 85n35, 98n26, 113n27
*Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* 75–79, 118, 122–124, 133–135, 143, 167, 170, 174
Enlightenment, the 40
*entelecheia* 79, 93, 95, 96, 124, 176
Epicureanism 193–194
Epicurus 201
*episteme* 71, 72, 74, 82n5
ethical life 4, 7, 39, 41–44, 46, 47, 49, 50, 174–188, 201n16

Fackenheim, Emil 83n20, 85n35
*Faith and Knowledge* 135

Ferrarin, Alfredo 1, 34, 71, 88, 93, 95, 96, 164, 166, 167
Ferro, Bernardo 7
Fichte, J.G. 1, 135, 186n18, 192
Findlay, J.N. 82n1, 117
forms (Platonic or Aristotelian) 4, 37, 46, 58, 60, 63, 66, 70, 72, 73, 74, 82, 83n9, 83n19, 88, 94, 95, 107, 111, 116, 118, 122–126, 136, 139, 140, 141, 145n32, 145n45, 163, 164

Gaiser, Konrad 66
Garve, Christian 176–177
*Geist see* Spirit
German, Andy 5
Geuss, Raymond 180
God 5, 15, 20n7, 35, 36, 42, 49, 72, 76, 77, 78, 81, 86–102, 119, 120
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von 52n6, 68n1, 145n32
Good, the idea of 4, 23n39, 61, 63, 70–85, 88, 170, 182
*Gorgias* 65

Hartmann, Klaus 84n22, 103, 112n4
Hegel, G.W.F., *passim*.
Hegel Society of America 2–3
Heidegger, Martin 19n1, 24n54, 67
Heraclitus 20n7, 26, 27–28, 32, 86
Hesiod 18, 21n17
*History of Animals* 139
Hobbes, Thomas 135, 184
Hölderlin, Friedrich 52n6, 57
Homer 13–14, 18, 21n17, 34, 125
Hume, David 68n3, 135
*hupokeimenon* 5, 105–107, 112

Idea (Hegelian) 64, 69n16, 76, 77, 80, 84n32, 89, 98n24, 99n38, 124, 128n2, 143, 165, 166, 167, 168–169, 170, 171, 172n10, 193, 196, 200
ideas (Platonic) *see* forms
intellect *see nous*
Inwood, Michael 85n35, 144n5
Ionians 27, 30, 34

Jacobi, F.H. 137
Judaism 36, 192

Kant, Immanuel 1, 2, 6, 7, 28, 39, 40, 41, 44, 50, 51, 52n10, 53n20, 57, 59, 64, 66, 67, 68n1, 68n3, 69n19, 75, 129n34, 131n74, 133, 134, 135, 142, 147, 151, 152, 154, 157–158, 167, 175–179, 181, 182, 185, 186n18,
Klein, Jacob 66
Kojève, Alexandre 84n22
Kramer, Hans 66

*Laws* 20n10, 23n39
*Lectures on Aesthetics* 69n21
*Lectures on the History of Philosophy* 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9–24, 25–38, 57–69, 71, 83, 86, 88, 92, 97, 98n26, 115–116, 129n34, 133, 135, 190, 191, 192–193
Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm 68n3, 176
Lesher, James 12
Leucippus 26
Locke, John 135
Logic (division of Hegel's system) 4, 5, 6, 25, 29, 34, 61, 78, 80, 87, 89, 90, 99n38, 101n83, 103, 119, 122, 123, 131n72, 154–157, 164, 165, 168–171
*logos* 28, 100n48, 107, 118, 127, 165, 167, 176

Martin, Gottfried 66
Melissus 18
Mendelsohn, Joshua 5
*Meno* 4, 61, 69n14, 70, 82n1, 82n5
*Metaphysics* 5, 9–10, 15, 17, 20n10, 21n25, 22n28, 23n39, 33, 37, 76, 86–102, 103–114, 115, 116, 119, 125, 143, 148, 162
Metcalf, Robert 3
Mure, G.R.G. 1, 116, 117

Napoleon 34
Natorp, Paul 66
Neo-Platonism 86, 97
*Nicomachean Ethics* 84n27, 138, 140, 142, 162, 176, 180
Nietzsche, Friedrich 18, 67
*noēsis* 5, 72, 91, 96
non-contradiction, principle of *see* contradiction, principle of
*nous* 3–4, 5, 6, 20n4, 25–38, 71, 79, 94, 95, 96, 97n4, 99n44, 101n76, 101n81, 112n5, 115, 119, 120, 121, 122, 125–127, 129n35, 141, 142, 162, 163
Nuzzo, Angelica 3, 7

Orsini, Federico 6
*ousia* 5, 33, 86, 87, 93, 97n1, 100n48, 101n76, 107, 120, 145n32
Owen, G.E.L. 109

Parmenides 2, 10, 16–17, 18, 23n39, 23n43, 69n15, 73, 97
*Parmenides* (Platonic dialogue) 4, 18, 19, 61, 69n15, 70, 73–74, 81, 82, 109, 160n26

Pascal, Blaise 18
Pericles 34, 36
*Phaedo* 4, 11, 28, 61, 69n14, 70, 72, 113n28
*Phaedrus* 69n14, 97
*Phenomenology of Spirit*, *The* 1, 7, 25, 36, 59, 61, 69n20, 69n21, 75, 78, 79, 84n29, 84n33, 85n47, 117, 119, 134, 159n22, 174, 190, 191, 192, 200n6, 201n16, 201n23
Philosophy of Nature 4, 29, 118, 120, 123, 130n46, 136
*Philosophy of Right* 7, 50, 157, 164, 174, 175–179, 182–185
Philosophy of Spirit 4, 5, 6, 29, 115, 116, 117, 119, 121, 124, 133, 135, 137, 143, 169, 170, 174
*phusis* 9, 10, 11, 20n2, 20n8, 20n10, 46, 120
*Physics* 21n25, 22n28, 25, 180
Pinkard, Terry 84n22
Plato 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20n10, 23n39, 23n48, 24n55, 25, 26, 28, 30, 34, 36, 37, 38n9, 57–69, 70–85, 88, 89, 103, 117, 118, 119, 138, 144n30, 160n26, 178, 179, 182, 193, 196
Plotinus 86, 97n4, 115
Plutarch 25
*polis* 4, 7, 36, 44, 50, 163, 171, 174, 175, 180–185, 187n27, 187n41, 187n43
*Politics* 7, 174–188
*Posterior Analytics* 140
praxis (vs. theory) 161–164, 167–170, 171
*Protagoras* 61, 65
Protestant Reformation 2, 64
*psuchē* 6, 14, 96, 115, 121–122, 124
Pythagoreans 26, 138

Redding, Paul 84n22
*Republic* 4, 15, 23n39, 61, 64, 70, 72, 138, 144n30, 145–146n31
*Rhetoric* 17
Riedel, Manfred 167
Ritter, Joachim 176
Romanticism 52n9
Rorty, Richard 84n22
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 144n27

Schelling, F.W.J. 1, 35, 36, 57, 85n48, 88, 89, 133
Schiller, Friedrich 4, 39–41, 50, 52n9, 52n10, 53n14, 68n1
Schleiermacher, Friedrich 57, 61, 68n1, 137
*Science of Logic*, *The* 5, 6, 25, 34, 61, 87, 90, 103–105, 119, 154, 164–165, 168, 169
Seneca 199
Sextus Empiricus 6, 19, 147, 150–152, 155, 201n12
Shakespeare, William 34
Simplicius 23n43, 25
*Sittlichkeit see* ethical life
Skepticism 3, 7, 190, 192, 193–194, 200
Socrates 4, 9, 10, 11, 19, 20n4, 20n10, 23n39, 25, 26, 28, 30, 32, 36, 39–56, 57, 63, 65, 72, 73, 88
*Sophist* 65, 69n14
sophists 65
Sophocles 69n21
speculative philosophy 7, 75, 76, 98n12, 121, 124, 126
Spinoza, Baruch 68n3, 135, 146n47, 166
Spirit 4, 5, 6, 28, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35, 62, 81, 82, 85n40, 115, 116, 117, 119, 120, 121, 122, 124, 133, 135, 137, 142, 143, 162, 165, 166, 167, 169, 170, 174, 175, 180, 182, 191
*Statesman* 19, 24n55
Stoicism 3, 7, 177, 189–201
Strauss, Leo 4, 66
stripping argument 103–114
substance *see ousia*
Surber, Jere O'Neill 4

Thales 12, 13, 26, 33, 36
*Theaetetus* 61
*Timaeus* 23n39, 61, 69n16

unhappy consciousness, the 192

Velkley, Richard 39, 45
Vlastos, Gregory 67

Wilford, Paul T. 4
Williams, Bernard 175
Winckelmann, Johann Joachim 68n1
Winfield, Richard Dien 6
Wolff, Christian 135, 176, 177, 178
World Spirit 49, 50, 124

Xenophanes 3, 9–24
Xenophon 11

Zeno 18, 73, 85n35
*zētein* 15–17, 19